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By

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To
RUTH, DON, AND MARILYN
WITH
GRATITUDE AND AFFECTION

PREFACE

We are indebted to the Hebrew writers of the Old Testament for the moral and religious ideals of Western culture fully as much as we are to the Greek philosophers for those ideas from which our scientific views of life and the world are derived. In many respects, however, we have placed greater emphasis on the Greek contributions to our civilization than on those elements given to us by the Hebrews. Ours is a scientific age, and we have been inclined to attach more significance to the currents of thought which form the background of this particular outlook. Nevertheless, we need to bear in mind that the scientific perspective, important as it is for understanding contemporary culture, is not the only way to view modern life. The moral ideals of an age constitute a vital part of its civilization, and this is also true of the religious interpretations of life which find expression in the culture of a people. It is for these reasons that an understanding of the philosophical ideas in the Old Testament is highly relevant at the present time.

This book is a detailed and thoroughly documented introduction to the philosophy of the Old Testament. It is an attempt to present impartially the significant ideas expressed in the various parts of this literature. It is not written as an apology in support of all or any of these ideas; neither is it intended to discredit any of the views found in the Old Testament. The aim of the book is to aid the reader in understanding the materials which are there. The evaluation of these ideas, like those which belong to any literature, must be left to each individual.

There are difficulties which must be overcome if the Old Testament is to be approached in the spirit of philosophy. For one thing, no fixed or final conclusions about any of its teachings can be accepted in advance. The ideas which one finds expressed in the literature must be evaluated in each instance on the basis of the evidence which can be found to support it. This is not an easy goal to attain, for biblical literature has often been presented from a sectarian point of view and one's prejudices concerning matters of vital importance are not easily set aside. Further difficulties arise from the nature of the literature itself and the way in which it has been preserved through the centuries. Original documents have been supplemented so many times by the work of editors that one cannot always be sure where each portion of the text belongs. Then, too, the historical backgrounds are usually omitted, and they must be supplied if the reader is to grasp the ideas intended by the original authors.

The author has tried to present in nontechnical language those conclusions and interpretations concerning which there is general agreement among the recognized scholars in the field. While there is always the possibility that new evidence will come to light which will alter positions previously held, we have enough information and knowledge at the present time to enable us to go a long way toward the understanding of this important source of our modern culture.

While this book has been written primarily for students of philosophy and religion, the author hopes that it will be of value to those engaged in religious education and activities and to thoughtful laymen seeking an informative guide to the significant ideas expressed in the Old Testament.

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CHARLES H. PATTERSON

Lincoln, Nebraska
February, 1953

CONTENTS

CHAPTER PAGE

1 INTRODUCTION 3

2 THE SCIENTIFIC METHOD OF STUDYING THE OLD TESTAMENT 25

3 THE CANAANITE BACKGROUND 50

4 THE BEGINNINGS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT . . . 75

5 THE EARLY JUDEAN HISTORY 99

6 THE EARLY EPHRAIMITE HISTORY 121

7 PROPHECY IN ISRAEL 142

8 THE PROPHECIES OF AMOS AND HOSEA 164

9 ISAIAH, THE SON OF AMOZ 194

10 JEREMIAH 220

11 EZEKIEL 246

12 DEUTERO-ISAIAH 270

13 MINOR PROPHETS 295

14 THE LAW CODES 328

15 THE SAGES OF THE OLD TESTAMENT 356

16 SHORT STORIES IN THE OLD TESTAMENT 388

17 THE BOOK OF DANIEL AND APOCALYPTIC LITERATURE . 408

18 THE BOOK OF PSALMS 434

19 THE APOCRYPHA 462

20 THE PSEUDEPIGRAPHA 485

21 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION 505

INDEX OF SCRIPTURE REFERENCES 533

INDEX OF NAMES AND TITLES 541

INDEX OF SUBJECTS 547

The Philosophy of the Old Testament

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

What Is the Old Testament?

The Old Testament is one of the great books of the world. Although it was written in ancient times, it has survived the test of the centuries and it is still one of the most influential of all contemporary books. The greatness of the Old Testament is indicated, in part, by the fact that it belongs to the sacred literature of at least three of the major religions of the world. Among the Jews, the Mohammedans, and the Christians, it is regarded as holy and inspired. For the adherents of these religious groups it is a book which contains, in some degree, the revelation of the Supreme Being and for this reason it is an authoritative source for the determination of specific beliefs and the regulation of human conduct.

The Old Testament, consequently, is one of the most influential books of the modern world. It was a major part of the first printed book; and its circulation still exceeds, or very nearly exceeds, that of any other volume ever published. It is not, however, in the size of its circulation that we find the true measure of its worth. That is to be found in the way in which its teachings have influenced the course of human civilization and in the difference which it has made in the lives of human beings. There is, of course, no method for measuring accurately the influence of this book in either of these areas, but we can mention some of the results which have been derived from it.

In the first place, it must be recognized that the Old Testament has been an important factor in the rise and development of Christianity. Practically all the early Christian literature presupposed a familiarity with the Old Testament writings. In the

New Testament, for example, most of the writings, if not all of them, were produced by men who had been brought up in the Jewish faith. The Old Testament was the only Bible or collection of sacred writings which they knew and they were constantly making references to it. Since the people to whom they were writing were likewise familiar with the language and the ideals of the Old Testament, it was only natural that they should make use of the concepts and ideas of this literature in setting forth their own thoughts with reference to contemporary or future events. Thus we find the Gospels, Epistles, and other writings of the New Testament filled with quotations from and allusions to the Old Testament.

Because of this use of the Old Testament in the development of early Christianity, no one can understand this movement unless he is familiar with the literature from which so much of it was derived. How, for instance, could anyone understand those passages in the synoptic Gospels in which Jesus is referred to as a prophet unless he knows the meaning which was attached to that term? This meaning will be clear only as one becomes familiar with the function of prophecy as it developed among the Hebrew people. Many of the conversations which are reported concerning Jesus have to do with portions of the Old Testament, and these cannot be understood apart from the historical setting in which they were first given. According to the earlier narratives of the New Testament, the main theme of Jesus' teaching was the coming of the kingdom of God. His hearers could readily understand what He was talking about since they were familiar with this idea as it had been developed in the Hebrew scriptures; but unless the modern reader can interpret these sayings in the light of the same background they will not be intelligible to him. The same thing is true about the references to Jesus as the Messiah. What this term meant to Jesus' contemporaries can be determined only in the light of what that term had meant to the Hebrew prophets and other writers of the Old Testament.

The letters of Paul contain numerous references to such topics as Jewish legalism, stories about Israel's heroes, apocalyptic hopes concerning the future, and other ideas set forth in the

Hebrew scriptures. The epistle to the Hebrews, written by a Jewish Christian, is essentially an interpretation of the Old Testament sacrificial system.[1] It is a very important document but its meaning is scarcely intelligible to anyone who is not familiar with the details pertaining to this system. The Book of Revelation is an expression of Jewish apocalypticism as it was applied to early Christian times.[2] The book abounds in the use of symbolism and metaphors, all of which have their antecedents either in the Old Testament or in the apocryphal literature which flourished during the last centuries prior to the beginning of the Christian era. Any attempt to understand this book apart from its historical background or the accepted form of writing in which it was expressed is doomed to failure. A knowledge of the Old Testament is an indispensable condition for an intelligent reading of almost any portion of the New Testament.

It is not only the early Christian literature which presupposes a knowledge of the Old Testament. The same thing is true concerning much of the classical literature of the West during medieval and modern times. Augustine's monumental work, *The City of God,* is one of the first expressions in book form of the Christian interpretation of history. The illustrations which the author used in bringing out the contrast between the city of man and the city of God were derived in large measure from the narratives of the Old Testament. Furthermore, his conception of the goal toward which history is moving is likewise patterned after the teachings of the Hebrew prophets. Toward the close of the medieval period the best thinking of the Western world was expressed in the writings of Thomas Aquinas. His works are still authoritative for one of the major branches of the Christian church. Anyone who has read Aquinas knows that references to the Old Testament, either direct or indirect, occur on almost every page of his writings.

The best-known writers in the fields of English and American literature have used the Bible so extensively that a thorough knowledge of the Old and New Testaments is a necessary prerequisite for an appreciative understanding of their work. The plays of William Shakespeare, the poetry of John Milton, and the writings of Tennyson, Browning, Emerson, and many other men of letters are filled with biblical allusions. No one can hope to follow their thinking unless he is acquainted with the book from which they drew not only a wealth of illustrative material but the inspiration which prompted their writing.

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[1] See George H. Gilbert, *Jesus and His Bible* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1926), pp. 153-71.

[2] See Shirley J. Case, *The Revelation of John* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1919), chaps. i-iii.

In addition to its effect upon literature, the Old Testament has influenced the course of political development. One of the great sources of the democratic idea, it has become prominent in Western culture. Long before the rise of democracy in ancient Greece, the Hebrew people had revolted against the oppression of an Egyptian Pharaoh. They did so with the confidence that Yahweh, the god whom they worshiped, was deeply concerned with the rights of individuals and would stand by them in their efforts to achieve freedom from the domination of an unjust ruler.[3] Throughout the entire course of their national history, the idea of the rights of the individual served as a restraining force on the power of their kings. Saul, the first king of the Hebrews, was prevented by the people whom he governed from carrying out a foolish decree which would have taken the life of the beloved Jonathan. At the close of the reign of King Solomon, the monarchy was divided because the heir to the throne had indicated that he would employ oppressive measures against the people, for which they would not stand. The prophets of the eighth century denounced the rulers of their day in no uncertain terms for the unfair economic system which took away the rights of the poor. They proclaimed justice and social righteousness as the foundation for any government that would be able to endure. It is true that there were many factors in Hebrew history which were not in accord with democracy as we understand it today. Nevertheless, the fact remains that the Hebrew people were among the first to give expression to those ideas and beliefs concerning the value of the individual on which our Western democracy has been based. It seems fitting to point out that the inscription which adorns the Liberty Bell, used to proclaim the independence of the American colonies, was taken from the Book of Leviticus in the Old Testament.

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[3] See Albert E. Bailey and Charles F. Kent, *History of the Hebrew Commonwealth* (New York: Chas. Scribner's Sons, 1920), pp. 35-36.

The writing of history is another area in which the influence of the Old Testament has been particularly strong. Although the Hebrews were not the first to make permanent records of past events, they did make a unique contribution in setting forth the purpose for which history should be written. A large portion of the Old Testament is made up of historical documents. They were written, not primarily for the sake of preserving an accurate record of past events, but to illustrate the way in which the authors believed that God had intervened in the affairs of men and nations. History was regarded as a revelation of the divine will. It exemplified those principles or ideals which determined the course of events, and it was in the light of these principles that human beings could learn how to direct their daily activities. The authors of the Old Testament knew nothing of historical science in the sense in which we use it today, but with reference to some of the lessons of history it is doubtful if anyone has ever achieved a better understanding than the one which they possessed. The writing of history was for them something more than a statement concerning what had occurred at a given time and place. It was an attempt to explain the meaning of events and this implied some interpretation of the process when viewed as a whole. It is with respect to this interpretation that the historical portions of the Old Testament are of greatest significance.

Contemporary Reading of the Old Testament

In view of the importance of the Old Testament for the development of Western culture, it would seem reasonable that familiarity with its contents should be recognized as an essential part of a liberal education. One would expect this book to be as well known as any of the great classics in either literature or science, yet it is one of the least known and understood of any of the great books which we possess. In spite of its wide circulation, which makes it available to everyone who cares to read it, a comparatively small number of persons have read it; and it would be safe to say that many of those who have read it do not understand what they have read. Some years ago a popular writer, Bruce Barton, published a book about the Bible under the title *The Book That Nobody Knows.* The title was, of course, a gross exaggeration, for there are many persons who are familiar with its contents and who have a fairly accurate understanding of what it means. The truth which that title was intended to convey was that the average person was not well informed about it and had no adequate appreciation of its worth. The book is not usually regarded as essential reading for any of the courses which make up a liberal education. It is seldom included in reading lists for such subjects as political science, literature, history, sociology, philosophy, or any of the other departments of our modern fields of knowledge. The assumption back of these facts is that biblical literature is relatively unimportant and educated people can do very well without paying much attention to it.

An older generation considered it the responsibility of the churches and other religious organizations to see that the youth were properly instructed in the contents of the Bible. Unfortunately, the instruction was usually given from a sectarian point of view. The method used was authoritarian, and little if any opportunity was given for scientific investigation concerning the meanings which the respective authors of the writings must have had in mind. Under these conditions it is easy to understand why interest in this type of study waned. More recently, the tendency in most of the larger religious organizations is to omit even this instruction. There are, to be sure, some notable exceptions but a very large percentage of those who belong to religious groups do not read the Old Testament nor do they have any adequate appreciation of its significance for our modern culture.

Some of the reasons for this contemporary attitude are fairly clear. In the first place the Bible is not an easy book to read and understand. This is true whether we have in mind the entire Bible or just the Old Testament. The Bible is ancient literature. The different books which are included in it were written under conditions that present a striking contrast to the ones with which we are familiar. Books published at the present time are dated. The author's name is printed in the front of each one. Usually there is a preface or an introduction in which the author explains his reasons for writing the book. He tells us to whom he is writing, the conditions which prompted him to set forth his message, and the purpose or objective which he hopes to accomplish by it. Furthermore, the fact that the book is printed enables the reader to be sure that what he has before him is exactly what the author expressed at the time the book was published. All these facts contribute a great deal toward a correct understanding of what was in the author's mind.

In the case of the Old Testament this information is lacking. So far as more than half of its contents are concerned, we do not know who the authors were. The original manuscripts are no longer in existence and we do not have any firsthand copies of them. The nearest we can come to the original must be derived from that which has been copied and recopied many times. Since all of this copying took place before the era of printing, the work had to be done by hand and it was possible to make only one copy at a time. We know from our own experience that it is practically impossible to copy a very long manuscript without making some changes in it. This is true even in those instances where the copyist is trying his best to make an exact reproduction of the original. In the Old Testament there are many instances which seem to indicate that the copyist has supplemented the original material with whatever comments he judged to be appropriate. The problem arises as to what portions of the text were written by the original author and what portions were due to the work of copyists and later editors.

A more serious difficulty arises from the fact that information concerning the time of writing, the place of writing, and the conditions which called it forth are not stated directly in the text itself. Instances of this kind can be seen if one stops to examine almost any portion of the prophetic writings. So far as we can determine, the prophets were what we would call today practical preachers or social reformers. This means that they were deeply concerned about the social, political, and economic conditions of their times. For example, a prophet would appear at a certain place and deliver the message which he believed to be appropriate at that time. Later, the message would be committed to writing either by the prophet himself or by someone who acted under his direction. Only the message itself would be recorded. Nothing would be said about the background from which it was given. At another time the same prophet might go to another place and speak on an entirely different subject. This, too, would be recorded without any reference to the conditions under which it was given. It would probably be placed right next to the earlier material and without anything to indicate where the first stopped and the second began. We can imagine a process of this kind being carried on over a number of years. The records of the various addresses made would be written on sheets of parchment and every effort would be made to conserve space. The result might be intelligible to the writer, but for anyone who tries to read it after more than two thousand years have elapsed, it will require some effort to make out the meaning which the original author had in mind in each of his separate discourses.

The use of proper names gives rise to another difficulty since the oldest manuscripts did not have any glossary of names which would identify the object to which each one referred. When one comes across a particular name and he does not know whether it stands for an individual, a tribe, a city, or some other object, it is impossible to follow the author until the meaning of that term has been established.

The style of writing employed in many parts of the Old Testament creates another problem for the modern reader. This is especially true in those instances where a dramatic form of writing has been used. It may be that the author wished to have several persons speak, each one presenting a distinctive point of view. This method of presentation may be very effective provided that the reader knows just what portions of the text belong to each speaker. When this information is not given it is very difficult to make any sense out of the writing at all. There is, for example, a chapter in Isaiah in which the author uses four different speakers. The prophet speaks, Yahweh the Hebrew god speaks, the nation of Israel speaks, and the foreign nations speak. The text as it is found in our Old Testament does not indicate which of these four speakers is responsible for any one of the passages. When the text is separated into its various parts, and each one is assigned to its respective author, the entire chapter becomes meaningful. Without this separation the original meaning is lost. Chapter 53 of Isaiah, which contains one of the famous "Songs of the Suffering Servant," is another instance in which the dramatic form is used. Much of the confusion concerning the meaning of this chapter would be clarified if each part of it would be assigned to the appropriate speaker.

Additional difficulties arise from the fact that the Old Testament was written long before the era of modern science. It was produced by persons whose world view was very different from the one that is usually associated with our contemporary pattern of living. Customs and beliefs which are foreign to our modern ways of thinking are reflected in almost every part of the literature. In order to understand what is there, the modern reader must think himself back into the age when the Bible was produced. He must reconstruct as far as he is able the customs, conventions, and patterns of thought which were current when the original author lived and carried on his work. He must understand the function of myth, the miraculous type of explanation, and many other forms of expression which occur in the biblical writings.[4]

In view of all these problems and difficulties, an intelligent reading of the Old Testament may seem to the modern layman to be an impossible task. He has neither the time nor the ability to reconstruct the original text nor is he able to determine with accuracy the historical background out of which each part of the text was produced.

If the average reader today had to rely on his own efforts alone to solve the problems of biblical criticism the task would be a hopeless one. Fortunately, for anyone who wants to understand the Old Testament this condition does not exist. Competent scholars with the necessary equipment for dealing with ancient languages and the various problems which arise in connection with Old Testament interpretation, have explored the field and the results of their researches are now available to anyone who is interested in them. It is true that some of the earlier reports concerning biblical investigations were expressed in technical language which the average layman could not understand. At the present time there are some problems, relative to the Old Testament, which are of interest only to the experts and these discussions usually employ technical language. However, the conclusions of biblical scholarship are now made available in scores of nontechnical books which can be read and understood by anyone who wants to know something about it. Books of this nature supply the basic information which makes the reading of the Old Testament an interesting and profitable study.[5]

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[4] A good popular account of the difficulties involved in reading the Old Testament prophets may be found in C. E. Jefferson, *The Cardinal Ideas of Isaiah* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1928), chaps. i-ii.

Methods of Studying the Old Testament

Methods of study have an important bearing on the investigation of any field of knowledge, and certainly the study of the Old Testament is no exception. The current lack of interest in this field of literature has been due in no small measure to the faulty methods that have been employed in connection with it. It may be helpful to point out some of these methods and to indicate why they are inadequate.

1. THE AUTHORITARIAN METHOD. This method consists of the use of some authority or established body of doctrine which fixes the meaning of any portion of the text under consideration. For example, if the authority is the accepted body of teaching to which a particular church has subscribed, then the Bible must be interpreted in a manner that will not contradict these teachings. If the church holds, as many of them have done,

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[5] A large number of good introductory texts are available at the present time. The list includes such books as Julius A. Bewer, *The Literature of the Old Testament* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1924); Henry T. Fowler, *A History of the Literature of Ancient Israel* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1912); W. O. Oesterley and T. H. Robinson, *An Introduction to the Books of the Old Testament* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1934); H. P. Smith, *The Religion of Israel* (New York: Chas. Scribner's Sons, 1914); H. W. Robinson, *The Old Testament: Its Making and Meaning* (Nashville: Cokesbury Press, 1937); E. W. K. Mould, *Essentials of Bible History,* 2nd ed. (New York: The Ronald Press Co., 1950), and many others.

that the Bible is an infallible book and the various parts of it are all in harmony with each other, then whatever is found in the text itself must be made to fit this preconceived notion. If one part of the book seems to be at variance with another, it will not do to admit that the different writers may have held opposite views about the topic that is in question. That would, of course, imply that at least one or the other of them was mistaken, and this would be contrary to the belief in an infallible book. What the student must do then, if he is to accept this point of view, is to find some method for bringing the meaning of the two passages into harmony with each other.

The same principle would hold if one should come across a passage which seems to be contrary to the established creed of the church. The reader must hold that the so-called contradiction is an apparent one only. If he can find the true meaning of the passage it will support rather than contradict the established or recognized authority.

This method of studying the Bible has a long history. It has been used by many of the prominent men of the Christian church. Its advantages from the standpoint of an authoritative statement are easy to see. So long as this method is followed there is no danger of students straying from the fold. No innovations of doctrine will ever occur nor will any departure from time-honored traditions ever result from an investigation of the Scriptures. What one shall believe concerning the teachings of the Bible is fixed in advance. There is no danger of heresy so long as this method is followed. The more one reads, the more confirmation he is bound to find for the beliefs which he has already accepted. No wonder some of the leaders of various church organizations have regarded this method of study as the only safe one for their followers to use.

It is, however, in this matter of safety that the real danger of the authoritarian method is to be found. The method is altogether too safe. It makes the false teachings just as valid as the true ones. Of course, the authoritarian holds that there can be no error in the established doctrines which he has accepted. But he has no sound basis for this assumption. He may claim that he has accepted the Word of God and that he holds to it in preference to any form of human argument. What he actually does is to accept some human opinion, both with regard to what constitutes the Word of God and the meaning which this Word is intended to convey. If the judgment of the human mind is not something that can be trusted, what right does he have to maintain his own belief as to what the Word of God really is? There is no authoritarian answer to this question which does not involve a begging of the question or, in other words, an assumption of the thing to be proved.

All human opinions are fallible, and for this reason any established traditions concerning the nature of the Bible and the relationships of its various parts to one another should be open to inquiry and further investigation. The authoritarian method is inadequate for this purpose since it makes no provision for distinguishing between what is true and what is false concerning these basic assumptions. It is simply a device which enables one to cling to his preconceived ideas no matter what he may find in the text itself. The unreliability of this method can be seen still further in the open disagreements of the so-called "authorities." There are differences of opinion as to the literature that may be regarded as inspired. Even if this question could be settled beyond dispute, there would be the further difficulty of establishing the correct principles in accordance with which it is to be interpreted. Some have held that a strict literal interpretation should always be accepted, while others would insist that there are some instances when it is necessary to depart from this method. If one believes that it is possible to make a correct choice between the conflicting authorities, it is quite obvious that in so doing he must make use of some principle that is outside the authority itself.

2. THE ALLEGORICAL METHOD.[6] This method is based on the assumption that there is a hidden meaning which is not revealed through a literal interpretation of the text. Accordingly, it is necessary to regard the actual statements which are made as symbols, the real meaning of which can be discerned only by

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[6] See Frank Eakin, *Getting Acquainted with the New Testament* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1927), and also Harry E. Fosdick, *The Modern Use of the Bible* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1920).

those who are properly qualified to see the truths which they represent.

This method is a useful one and it has been employed by various individuals who have had many different purposes in mind. In the ancient world one finds this method of interpretation used by Philo, the Alexandrian Jew who lived during the first century before the beginning of the Christian era. Philo was a student not only of Hebrew scriptures but also of Greek philosophy. He had a rather broad outlook which enabled him to see a great deal that was good in the literature of people other than his own. He was convinced that the Greek philosophers had arrived at some very important truths, but he also believed these same truths had been revealed to the Jews through Moses and the Old Testament prophets. It seemed to him that the chief difference between the teachings of the Jews and the Greeks was to be found in the respective manner in which they had been received. What the Jews knew on the basis of revelation the Greeks had discovered through the proper use of their reasoning powers. The same spirit, which Philo called the divine *Logos* or world reason, enabled the Jews to arrive at truth through one method and the Greeks to reach the same truth through another method.

The question naturally arises as to how Philo could possibly find the same truths in these two very different sources? If the Old Testament were to be interpreted literally, it simply could not be done. But Philo maintained that the Old Testament could not be interpreted that way. Taken literally, there are various parts of the text which, according to Philo, do not make sense. We are told, for example, in the creation story of Genesis that certain things were made on each of the six days which were bounded by sunrise and sunset. But we are also told that the sun, moon, and stars were not made until the fourth day! How could there have been an evening and a morning before they were made? Again we are told in the story of the Garden of Eden that Adam and Eve hid themselves among the trees of the garden. How could one hide from an all-seeing eye? Now, if the Bible is to make sense, and Philo never doubted that it did, it must be that these passages mean something other than what they seem to say. They must be interpreted allegorically. If one can only discern the hidden meaning that lies within these texts, he will see that they are in perfect harmony with each other. The contradictions will all be resolved. Furthermore, if this type of interpretation is used freely enough, the text of the Old Testament can be seen to symbolize the same doctrines which are expressed in the philosophical writings of Plato and other Greek philosophers.

Allegory is indeed a wonderful method for the interpretation of the Old Testament. By its use one can make any piece of writing mean exactly what he wants it to mean. There is scarcely a problem that has to do with biblical interpretation of any kind which may not be solved by the skilful use of allegory. Any discrepancies between one part of the teaching and some other part can be resolved easily and quickly by the application of this method. In the same way one can reconcile the teachings of the Bible with the latest findings of modern science and thus bring to an end any conflict between revelation and science. No wonder this method has been used so extensively by those who had some particular thesis to defend.

An interesting illustration of the use of allegory can be seen in the way in which some of the early Christians defended the use of the Old Testament when it was under attack by the Gnostics. The Gnostic movement was a combination of philosophical and theological tenets put together in a manner which appealed strongly to large groups of people. Some of these Gnostics claimed to be the only true Christians of their time since they accepted the ethical teachings of Jesus and rejected the ideals and teachings of the Old Testament. They maintained that the god of the Old Testament was a cruel, arbitrary, and despotic sort of being who took delight in torturing those who did not live in accordance with his demands. He was a transcendent being far removed from direct contact with human beings. He was to be feared and obeyed but could not be regarded as a friend or intimate companion. The god revealed in the teachings of Jesus was, they believed, a very different type of being. People were taught to think of him as a father, one who was interested in their personal welfare, and one who would never forsake them no matter what they might do. The basis for the only requirements which he asked of human beings was to be found in the law of love. God was a wise and loving being, wishing only for people to develop the same moral qualities which he possessed. In view of what they regarded as an essential difference between the ideals of Jesus and the teachings of the Old Testament, they said it would be impossible for individuals to accept both. To accept either one would necessarily imply a rejection of the other. Because they accepted the teachings of Jesus they were therefore vigorously opposed to any acceptance of the Old Testament as the word of God.

The majority of those who were members of the Christian church still accepted the Old Testament as a holy and inspired book of scriptures. Many of them had a Jewish background and they knew no other Bible. The problem which they faced in meeting the Gnostics was that of finding some way to reconcile the stories and other teachings of the Old Testament with the ethical ideals of Jesus. It was the method of allegory which came to the rescue. By insisting that the Old Testament narratives concerning bloodshed and cruelty were not to be interpreted literally, they found in them a hidden meaning which could always be reconciled with the noblest and best of the teaching of Jesus. For example, the warfare between the Israelites and the Canaanites was not to be regarded as a case of actual fighting between human beings, but rather as a symbol of the spiritual struggle which must always be carried on in the conflict between good and evil. In this manner the method of allegory would always come to the rescue and solve any problem of interpretation that might arise. The Christians were able thus to meet the attack of the Gnostics without surrendering the Old Testament as their Bible.

Origen was one of the early church fathers who made extensive use of the allegorical method. He insisted that all parts of the Old Testament had a hidden as well as a historical meaning. Armed with this method of interpretation, he could find in the Old Testament full confirmation for even his wildest imaginations. Augustine, one of the ablest thinkers of the Church during the fourth and fifth centuries, found the method of allegory a most useful instrument for the interpretation of Scripture. In the New Testament narrative which describes Jesus' conversation with the woman at the well of Samaria, it is said that He told her to summon her husband. When she replied she had no husband Jesus reminded her that she had five husbands and the one with whom she was living at the time was not her real husband. According to Augustine the word "husband" symbolizes the understanding and the reference to five husbands really means the five senses through which knowledge is obtained. Again, in the narrative recorded in the Gospel of John there is a statement that John the Baptist declared himself to be unworthy even to undo the shoes which Jesus was wearing. The two shoes mentioned in this story refer, according to Augustine, to the old and the new dispensations.

Obviously, there are no limits to the meanings which may be derived from an unrestricted use of this method. It is for this reason that the method stands in ill-repute at the present time. A method which enables anyone to prove whatever he wishes to prove does not establish the truth of anything at all. Although it is still used in some quarters to reconcile the teachings of the Bible with modern science, or to confirm some of the traditional teachings of certain religious organizations, it is not a method which commends itself to the honest inquirer seeking to understand the literature of the Bible.

3. THE DETACHED METHOD.[7] A third method which has proved equally unsatisfactory is the detached method. It consists in taking passages from the Bible out of the context in which they were given and applying them to times and situations which were foreign to the thinking of the individuals who wrote them. It is sometimes known as the "proof-text" method for it is usually employed by those who wish to establish the idea that their particular doctrine is based on the Scriptures. An example of this use of the Old Testament can be seen in the way in which events have been interpreted as the fulfilment of prophecies made by individuals who lived a long time before the events took place.

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[7] This method along with others is described in Frank Eakin, *op. cit.*, chap. i.

For instance, the author of the Gospel of Matthew found in the story of the flight into Egypt on the part of Joseph and Mary a fulfilment of the prophecy of Hosea when he wrote "When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt." If this passage from the Book of Hosea is interpreted in the light of the context in which it was written, it will be evident that the prophet was talking about the children of Israel and their deliverance from the land of Egypt. It, obviously, had no reference at all to future events. It is only by taking this passage out of its context that it can be regarded as a prophecy concerning the child Jesus and His sojourn with His parents in the land of Egypt. Similarly, this author, as well as many other Christians, has found all sorts of "fulfilments" of Old Testament predictions. This is not to say that there are no prophecies in the Old Testament concerning future events. A careful reading of the literature will indicate that such passages are to be found. The point we wish to make clear is that we have no right to regard a passage as a prophecy of future events unless the context indicates that the author intended it to be interpreted in that way.

Probably no portion of the Old Testament has suffered more from this kind of interpretation than the apocalyptic writings which are found in the Book of Daniel and in parts of Ezekiel and Zechariah. Because these writings abound in symbolism, it is possible to make them confirm whatever the reader or interpreter may have in mind. In this way it has been argued that such events as the rise of Mohammedanism, the fall of Rome, the appearance of the United States as a world power, the outbreak of world wars, and hundreds of other events have all been prophesied in the Scriptures.

In a similar manner statements contained in the Bible have been abstracted from their contexts and made to support ideas and doctrines for which they were never intended. An example of this kind can be seen in the use of the statement "take a little wine for thy stomach's sake" to support the program involved in the manufacture and sale of intoxicating liquors. The same is true of extreme nationalists who quote Paul's statement "the powers that be are ordained of God" to support their belief concerning one's allegiance to the government. Any thesis which anyone may have at any time can be supported by Scripture if this type of interpretation is allowed.

Although this method is particularly useful to those who are seeking biblical confirmation for their established prejudices, it has no value at all for those who are seeking an objective and unbiased understanding of the writings as they were intended by the authors who wrote them.

In sharp contrast with all three of these methods of study, the scientific method of the modern biblical scholar aims at the exact meaning which each author had in mind at the time he wrote. To obtain this objective he employs whatever resources are available. So far as it is possible for him to do so, he sets aside any preconceived notions he may have about the literature and draws his conclusions solely on the basis of the facts which are presented to him. It will be the purpose of the following chapter to explore this method in some detail. Before doing so, however, there is another question which needs to be considered. It has to do with the relationship of the Old Testament to the study of philosophy.

The Philosophical Significance of the Old Testament

We are not accustomed to think of the Old Testament as a book of philosophy. There are some respects in which this attitude is correct, for the book is primarily religious rather than philosophical. Its teachings are presented not from the point of view of logical argumentation but as a part of the religious instruction which was given for the admonition of the Hebrew people and through them to the rest of the world. Even so, the book has its philosophical implications and they are important for anyone who wants to construct a world view of his own that will be adequate to deal with the many problems which arise in connection with his own experience.

When we speak of the philosophy of the Old Testament, we have in mind the world view that is implied in the various writings which it contains. This does not mean there is a single world view of which all of the different authors were conscious but, rather, that each one of them had his own understanding of the nature of the universe and it was from that particular point of view that each of the respective writings was produced. It is the world views of these authors which we have in mind when we speak of the philosophy of the Old Testament.

Since the literature of the Old Testament includes a wide variety of literary forms, it is to be expected that the philosophy of the book will be expressed in many different ways. Each group of writers follows a unique pattern for expressing those ideas which are believed to be most important. The historians, for example, set forth a particular world view in their conception of history and its meaning for the people to whom they wrote. There have been many interpretations of history written by philosophers of different periods but no one of them has been more influential in the shaping of modern culture than the one set forth by the prophetic historians of the Old Testament. Whether one believes that it is a true interpretation or not, it is a point of view with which any honest individual should be familiar before he tries to make up his own mind about the meaning or lack of meaning exemplified in the historical process.

Another part of the Old Testament has to do with the laws by which the Hebrew people were governed. These law codes represent the requirements of the deity as they were understood by the respective authors of the different sets of commandments. These legal documents are of particular interest to the student of philosophy because they reveal the conception of law on which the specific statutes and ordinances were based. In brief, there is a philosophy of law which is implicit in each of the law codes of the Old Testament. This does not mean that all of the lawgivers had the same understanding of the requirements which the deity made upon his people. As a matter of fact, there is every indication of progress in this area just as we find it in other phases of Hebrew life and culture. The conceptions of justice which are revealed in the work of Israel's lawgivers have had an important bearing upon the development of our modern legal systems. This, in itself, constitutes a sufficient reason for giving careful attention to them.

Ideas concerning the meaning of right and wrong are a most important part of the philosophy of the Old Testament. We might even go further and say that ideas having to do with this subject are the most important ones in any individual's philosophy. Certainly, the authors of the Old Testament were concerned with moral issues and their convictions along these lines gave purpose and direction to all that they wrote. The prophets saw in the reign of moral law an explanation for the rise and fall of nations. The lawgivers tried to embody in their specific requirements the demands of righteousness, and the sages saw a close connection between right conduct and correct thinking in regard to the problems of everyday living. The priests, as a rule, defined goodness in terms of obedience to law with special reference to its ritualistic requirements. The prophets generally were opposed to this conception of goodness for, as they saw it, the most important thing about goodness was the motive from which particular acts were derived. The moral philosophy which one finds in the Old Testament covers a wide variety of ideas and beliefs. Some of these may appear to us to be crude and of a primitive nature, but others will stand out clearly as belonging to the noblest conceptions that have ever enriched the beliefs of men. If a clear understanding of moral issues demands a careful study of those problems as they were treated in Greek philosophy, it is equally important for the student of the present day to be familiar with the ethical teachings of the ancient Hebrews. Our modern culture is indebted to Isaiah and Jeremiah no less than it is to Plato and to Aristotle.

Although the problems of ontology and epistemology are not discussed directly in the Old Testament, it would be a mistake to suppose the various writings do not imply a conception of reality or specific methods for arriving at truth. It is with reference to these two problems that the Old Testament makes some of its most important contributions to philosophy. For an understanding of the real nature of the world the Hebrews took their cue from the inner experiences of human beings rather than the outer objects which appear to exist independent of human minds or of the spiritual aspirations which are connected with it. This is one of the major points of contrast between Hebrew and Greek thought. The materialistic philosophy of Democritus with his theory concerning the atoms, or the pantheistic scheme of the Stoic philosophers, could be developed from a doctrine which finds reality in physical objects, but nothing like either of these conceptions can be found in the Old Testament. For the Hebrews, the conception of God was of fundamental importance because without it they could not account for those inner experiences which, they believed, constituted the very essence of human existence.

One of the most fascinating things about the study of the Old Testament is the story of the growth and development of the conception of God. At no place do the authors achieve perfection in their thought about God. For that matter no one else has ever achieved it either. Even so, no one who is familiar with the Hebrew literature can deny that progress was achieved in this area of thought. The revisions which were made from time to time grew out of the inadequacies of the older conceptions when these were viewed in the light of new and changing experiences. Regardless of what one's final conclusions about the nature of deity may be, they ought to be made in the light of those concepts and insights which are revealed in the Old Testament.

Knowledge concerning the nature of God and His relation to the world is usually associated with the idea of a divine revelation. In the Old Testament the idea is expressed that the will of the deity was made known to the people through some kind of inner illumination given to Moses and the prophets. Now, whenever the idea of revelation is introduced, the problem arises concerning the way in which one may know when a true or genuine revelation has been received. Some criterion must be established which will make it possible to distinguish between true ideas and ones which are merely a projection of the individual's wishes or desires. In this connection one looks with interest at the Old Testament method for distinguishing between true and false prophets.

The place which should be accorded to the reasoning processes in the determination of truth is one of the problems discussed in the Book of Proverbs. It is treated, at least by implication, in other parts of the wisdom literature as well. It is also an important consideration in the writings of the prophets, especially the ones who insist upon reasonableness as an essential requirement for one's loyalty to the deity.

Taken as a whole, the Old Testament is a book in which there is set forth the particular world views of the best minds that were ever produced by the Hebrew people. Their insights concerning the problems of philosophy which we have mentioned are not to be set aside as ideas of only minor consequence. They have had a profound effect on the lives and thinking of people since that time when they were first written.

Chapter 2

THE SCIENTIFIC METHOD OF STUDYING THE OLD TESTAMENT

Reference was made in the previous chapter to certain erroneous methods of studying the Old Testament. These methods were criticized chiefly on the ground that they reveal only subjective interpretations with reference to the meaning of the literature. They tell us what an individual may wish to believe concerning the text or what it is that he desires to find in relation to it. They do not reveal objective truth concerning the writings, since their findings are not open to verification by others who may wish to approach the same problems from a different point of view.

What is needed is some method of study that will reveal what the author of any given passage meant by it at the time when it was first written. This is far more important than the interpretations which have been given to it by subsequent writers. In order to achieve this purpose it is necessary to establish facts and to draw conclusions which are warranted by them. The objective character of the results obtained can be tested by comparison with the work of others. In other words, if this method is used correctly it will permit the same kind of verification that we have in other fields of scientific inquiry.

The development and use of an objective procedure for studying the Old Testament is what has often been known as the method of *higher criticism.* Other names for the same process include such terms as the historical method, the scientific method, and the scholar's method. Regardless of the name which may be used to designate this type of investigation, the purpose of the method can be stated briefly and with clarity. It is to determine by means of the most reliable information that is available, the original meaning of any portion of the text under consideration. This point cannot be emphasized too much since it has often been charged by the critics of this method that it is employed only for the negative purpose of discrediting the writings or destroying the faith which one may have in them. The scientific study of biblical literature aims at neither the acceptance nor the rejection of any of the ideas which it contains. It seeks only to understand them. It is not concerned with the building up of an attitude of faith toward any particular theological doctrine nor with the destruction of any such attitude. Its purpose is purely an intellectual one. It aims only at knowing what is true in regard to the content of the original documents, and what meanings their respective authors attached to them.

The scientific approach to the study of the Old Testament includes two processes, one of which aims at the discovery of the content of the original text and the other tries to determine what the author meant by it at the time when it was first expressed. Since these two objectives require different techniques for their realization, it is important that we distinguish between them. The method which tries to determine the content of the original documents is known as *lower* or *textual criticism*. The interpretation of the documents or the attempt to find out what their authors meant is known as *higher criticism*. The procedures that are involved in each of these processes are complicated and require the work of carefully trained experts. We shall only try to indicate in a general way some of the more important problems that are encountered in each one of them.

Textual or Lower Criticism

The major problems which belong to this field arise from the fact that the writings which are included in the Old Testament were in existence long before the era of printing. Some of the sources used in certain parts of the literature appear to have been in existence as early as the ninth century B.C. A large portion of the writings was produced during the two centuries which followed this period. By the end of the third century B.C. practically all of the literature in our Old Testament had been completed.

Since the writings were all produced by hand, it was impossible to make a large number of copies of any one of them. Furthermore, it would be most unusual if any two copies of the same collection of writings would ever be exactly alike. We know from our own experience that it is practically impossible to copy a document of any great length by hand and have it like the original in every respect. Each time the document is recopied it will be more unlike the original than it was before. Our customary reliance on the printing press has a tendency to make us less careful in regard to making mistakes than we would be if we did not possess this instrument. The ancient Hebrew scribes who were carefully trained for their work did a much better job than we could do by hand at the present time. Even so, they were not infallible and we may be sure that each copy which was made had its own unique characteristics.

The oldest copies of the Old Testament which are in existence at the present time are many times removed from the original documents. They have been copied and recopied by each succeeding generation that preceded the time when they were first printed. How can we be sure that the writings which we possess at the present time are identical in meaning with their original versions? If the oldest existing manuscripts were all in complete agreement the problem would be much easier. This, however, is not the case. There are discrepancies in the respective contents of the oldest authentic texts which have been preserved. Which ones ought we to accept?

The problem is complicated still further by the method which seems to have been followed on the part of the editors and copyists who brought the writings into the particular form which we have now. It was their task to arrange the order of their materials as well as to preserve the content of each one. Frequently they would have to work with two or more documents dealing with the same theme. Instead of preserving each one separately, they would attempt an integration of their sources by abstracting statements from each one and putting them in the order that seemed most desirable. Since these original documents were produced by different individuals, many of whom were separated from each other by long periods of time, they did not always report the events about which they were writing in the same way. Occasionally the copyists or editors would find sharp discrepancies in the parallel accounts. Under these conditions they might think it advisable to add a few explanatory remarks in order to harmonize the different narratives. Whenever this was done, the next person to copy the manuscript would probably include these explanatory remarks along with the main body of the original materials.

There seems to be abundant evidence in our Old Testament to support the view that work of this nature occurs in many parts of the literature. Stories concerning the flood, the migrations of Abraham, the descent into Egypt, the crossing of the Red Sea, and many others were originally included in two or more independent sources. Historians who undertook the writing of a single complete narrative would use whatever sources were available. Instead of rewriting the materials in their own words, they would take excerpts from each source and piece them together to form a continuous story. When the excerpts did not fit together smoothly the editor would add a sentence or two of his own in order to clarify the particular point when it seemed to be in question.

In his book entitled *The Literature of the Old Testament,*[1] Bewer calls attention to an interesting example of this type of editorial comment. It has to do with a passage which occurs in Chapter 31 of Jeremiah. The prophet, like many of his predecessors, was fond of personifying the nation of Israel. In the 20th verse of this chapter the Israelite nation is referred to as God's son. In the following verse the same people are designated as God's daughter. According to Dr. Bewer, an editor who was copying this manuscript had a keen sense of humor, and when he noticed the change in gender of these two terms he made the following marginal note, "Verily, Yahweh has created a new thing in the earth: a man is changed into a woman!" The next editor or scribe who copied this chapter did not have the same sense of humor. Apparently, he did not see the point of this comment, so he simply included this statement in the main body of the text where it may be found at the present time.

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[1] Julius A. Bewer, *The Literature of the Old Testament* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1922), p. 147n.

When we stop to consider that the work of editing manuscripts, making additions to them, and copying them over again and again, went on for a period of centuries before the first one was printed, we can appreciate something of the task that has been involved in textual criticism. It has required the work of many experts who have devoted a major portion of their lives to it. Since the nature of their task has involved a careful study of ancient manuscripts, it could be carried on only by those who were familiar with the languages in which these different manuscripts were written. The authors of the Old Testament wrote in Hebrew but there are no surviving copies that were made directly from the originals. During the early centuries of the Christian era translations of the Old Testament were made into several different languages. Prior to this the writings had been translated into Greek. In many instances these copies were again translated into other languages. It is largely by means of a comparison of these ancient manuscripts with one another that textual critics try to determine the content of the original documents. They know that the texts have necessarily been altered through the processes of translation and it is possible within certain limits to detect the alterations that were made. Translators had their individual ideas concerning the meaning of the Scriptures and it would have been natural for them to read these ideas into the manuscripts with which they were working.

Because there are so many problems in connection with textual criticism that cannot be solved with complete certainty, the plan which has usually been followed is for a group of scholars to work independently on the same manuscripts and, after comparing notes at a later time, arrive at some agreement among themselves with reference to the exact words which should be used. The most expert scholarship in this field cannot settle all the issues that arise. They tell us quite frankly that there are some instances in which they can do little more than guess what the original documents actually contained. Sometimes they write footnotes concerning disputed passages, telling us what other translators have said, and then give their own reasons for the particular renderings which they have made.

The work of textual criticism of the literature of the Old Testament is still being carried on at the present time. Its best results are embodied in the new translations of the Scriptures which appear from time to time. No one of these translations is perfect, but each succeeding one represents a general agreement among expert scholars and they may be relied upon to give us the best information available about the original content of the various manuscripts.[2]

Higher Criticism[3]

The task of higher criticism is the correct interpretation of the literature. Granted that the textual critics are able to tell us with a fair degree of accuracy just what was contained in the original documents, we still need to know what these writings were intended to mean. This problem is not so simple as it may appear to be when we first think about. The authors of the Old Testament did not supply us with all of the information that is necessary to enable a modern reader to understand what they were saying. What they did write was intelligible to their contemporaries, and they probably had no idea that people of succeeding generations would ever be concerned with their messages.

So far as the major portion of the Old Testament literature is concerned, we do not know the name of the author of each section, nor is there any direct statement to indicate the place and time of writing or the objective which each author had in mind. Some of the prophetic books were produced by men whose names we know, but even in the case of these books there are materials from other sources that have been incorporated into the writings and we are not always sure just which portions are the work of the prophet himself. Outside the prophetic writings, we know very little about the authors of the Old Testament. We do not know the names of the men who wrote the historical documents, the law codes, the wisdom literature, the short stories, the Book of Psalms, or the apocalyptic writings contained in the Book of Daniel.

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[2] A brief account of textual criticism and higher criticism may be found in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* under the article entitled "Bible." Another short description of these two forms of criticism may be found in Frank Eakin, *Getting Acquainted with the New Testament* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1927). A somewhat longer and more popular treatment may be found in Ernest A. Trattner, *Unravelling the Book of Books* (New York· Chas. Scribner's Sons, 1929).

[3] The term "higher criticism" was first applied to the study of the Old Testament literature by Johann G. Eichhorn in his *Introduction to the Old Testament,* first published in 1779.

The worth and the significance of a piece of literature are not determined by its authorship alone. The Book of Job in the Old Testament is a great classic regardless of who wrote it or the time when it was produced. The same is true of the "Poems of the Suffering Servant," which are recorded in the latter part of Isaiah. The higher critic is interested in the question of authorship only for the reason that it helps him to understand what was written. We know from our own experience that the same words spoken by one individual under a certain set of circumstances would have a very different meaning if they were uttered by another person under different circumstances. How much difference it would make would vary with the particular theme that was presented. The same thing is true in regard to the Old Testament. We attach relatively little importance to the authorship of the Book of Proverbs since the meaning of these sayings is not dependent on the local circumstances under which they were first expressed. It is altogether different with the writing that we find in the Book of Isaiah or in the stories of Jonah and of Ruth. Here the local circumstances do throw a great deal of light on the meaning which the author intended.

A knowledge of the political, social, economic, and religious conditions which prevailed at the time of writing is an essential condition for interpreting the literature. No one could surmise what Amos and Hosea were talking about if he did not know something of the historical background out of which their prophecies were given. Some of this information can be inferred from the texts of these books, but it needs to be supplemented with materials from other sources.

The numerous law codes which are included in the Old Testament have a very definite relationship to the social and economic conditions which prevailed at the various times when they were given. This background may have been clear enough to the people who were living at the time, but it must be reconstructed by the modern student if he is to arrive at a correct interpretation of the literature. If a single introduction to any one of the Old Testament books would be sufficient to explain all that the book contains, the problem would be comparatively simple. Actually we know that many of these books are collections of separate writings produced at different intervals and written from different points of views. It is the task of higher criticism to separate these writings and to supply the background from which each one was written.

When the dramatic form of presentation is used, the critic must try to determine the respective characters who belong to each of the sayings and, in the light of this analysis, to arrive at some conclusion regarding the meaning of the passage when viewed as a whole. Whenever proper names are used in the text, he must try to find out the specific object to which each of the terms refers. He must distinguish between the original documents which belong to a given author and the later additions that were made to it. If possible, he must discover in each instance the purpose for which they were made. In brief, he must raise and answer, to the best of his ability, all questions which would throw any light on the original meaning of the text itself.

From these considerations it is evident that the task of higher criticism is a difficult and complicated one. In many respects it is even more difficult than textual criticism. Furthermore, it must be recognized that even after the critic has done his best with the materials at hand, the results of his investigations will not always yield complete certainty. Many times the conclusions that are drawn cannot be said to be anything more than probable. The higher critic must always stand ready, consequently, to modify his interpretations whenever the facts indicate that a better one is available. His procedure will be scientific since he allows the facts to determine his conclusions rather than letting his conclusions determine what facts shall be recognized.

The information which higher critics have used has been derived from many sources. Some of it has been obtained from archeologists whose findings have a direct bearing on the reliability of Old Testament narratives. Other materials have been taken from the work of secular historians. The reconstruction of any period of history in which some portion of the Old Testament has its setting is bound to throw light on the scriptural records. The studies made by anthropologists in relation to the social, economic, and religious practices of primitive people must also be taken into account. In fact the higher critic is bound to accept light from any quarter, and to be guided in his investigations by it. His most important source and the one which furnishes more material than any of the others is the Bible itself.

The higher criticism of the Old Testament is, to a very large extent, an attempt to interpret any one part of the literature by seeing it in the light of those facts which are revealed in some other portion of it. On the basis of all the relevant facts which he can obtain from all sources, the critic must attempt to draw only those inferences which are warranted by the materials that he has taken into account. In every case he must try to preserve an open mind which means that he is willing to make whatever changes of interpretations are necessary in order to bring his conclusions into harmony with all the known facts pertaining to the literature.

The procedures which are characteristic of higher criticism will be seen more clearly if we take into account some of the particular problems which have been approached by this method. For the purpose of illustration we will consider, in this chapter, the problem concerning the authorship of the first five books of the Old Testament. According to the traditional view, accepted for centuries by both Jews and Christians, these books were all written by one person known to us as Moses. Investigations made by higher critics indicate that these books have a composite authorship. It is believed they are the work of different men who lived and wrote at periods of time widely separated from one another. This interpretation is usually referred to as the *Documentary Hypothesis.*[4] A brief summary of the major arguments used in support of it will furnish a typical illustration of the purpose and methods of higher criticism.

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[4] The *Documentary Hypothesis* concerning the origin of the first six books of the Old Testament has a long history and many different opinions have been held by competent critics concerning the materials which should be included in it. At one time it was generally accepted that the Hexateuch was

The Argument for the Documentary Hypothesis

One of the first men in the modern period who applied scientific procedures to the study of the Old Testament was a Portuguese Jew named Baruch Spinoza. He lived in Holland and he has long been recognized as one of the most brilliant minds of the seventeenth century. His views concerning the Old Testament are expressed in a book called *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus,* published in 1670. Although he had been reared in a Jewish family where it was hoped that he would some day become a rabbi, Spinoza's studies and investigations led him to stray from the orthodox fold. When he refused to renounce some of the heretical positions with which he was charged, he was excommunicated from the Jewish synagogue and forced to leave the community in which he had lived. He found refuge in the home of a friendly Mennonite Christian family from whom he rented an attic room. It was here that he supported himself by polishing lenses, a trade which he had learned in his early youth. Because his manner of living was simple, he did not require very much money and this gave him the opportunity of spending the major portion of his time in the study and writing of philosophy. His achievements in this field have won for him a lasting fame and have put the whole Western world in his debt.

Spinoza's scientific attitude toward the study of the Old Testament is indicated by his own words. "I resolved forthwith to examine the Scriptures anew, in a spirit of entire freedom and without prejudice, to affirm nothing as to their meaning, and affirm nothing in the shape of doctrine, which I did not feel plainly set down in their pages." [5]

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composed of but four separative narratives known respectively as *J, E, D,* and *P.* This view has been modified in the light of more recent research. These investigations tend, on the whole, to support the view that these books contain the work of more than four authors. See in this connection Robert H. Pfeiffer, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1941), pp. 136-41.

[5] From the preface of *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus,* Elwes translation, taken from Joseph Ratner, *The Philosophy of Spinoza* (New York: The Modern Library, 1927).

What specific facts did he find which led him to question the time-honored tradition of Mosaic authorship? In the first place he found in the Book of Deuteronomy a story of Moses' own death. The narrative relates the events connected with Moses' journey to the top of the mountain that overlooked the land of Canaan into which he was not permitted to enter. It states that Moses died on this mountain and was buried there. Now it would be possible, on the assumption that God reveals future events to human beings, to see how the facts pertaining to Moses' own death had been revealed to him in advance so that he might have written the story of his death before the event actually took place. One fact, however, seemed to preclude this interpretation. It was the statement contained in the text itself, "no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day."[6] Had Moses written the account of his death, which was still in the future, would he have made that statement? Spinoza did not think so. He believed it was more reasonable to assume that the account had been written by someone who lived after the events referred to had taken place.

In Chapter 3 of Deuteronomy, there is an account of the iron bedstead which had belonged to Og, the king of Bashan. It was a huge affair that had been constructed for an enormous giant. The account states that the bedstead was preserved in the city of Rabbah that belonged to the Ammonites. Now this passage taken by itself would not indicate anything other than a mere historical reference. Spinoza, however, being familiar with the entire Old Testament, knew that in the book called II Samuel there is a statement which declares that the city of Rabbah was first conquered by the Hebrews under King David. Since David did not live until several centuries after Moses it would have been impossible for the account to have been written prior to the time when the Hebrews first learned of the existence of this city.

In Chapter 21 of Genesis there is a story which tells of the naming of the place called Beer-sheba. It is said that Abraham named the place and a reason is given for the act. In Chapter 26 of Genesis there is another account of the naming of this place. Nothing is said about Abraham, but it is Isaac who is given credit for the naming. Is it reasonable, Spinoza asked, to believe that these two conflicting accounts were both written by the same person? Does it not seem more likely that we have two separate accounts written by two different individuals?

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[6] Deut. 34:6.

Another passage seemed to Spinoza to suggest a similar explanation. In Chapter 12 of Genesis one finds the expression "And the Canaanite was then in the land." Anyone familiar with early Hebrew history would know that the inhabitants of Palestine prior to the invasion of the Hebrews were called Canaanites. It took several centuries for the Israelites to gain complete possession of the land. In fact it was not until after the establishment of the monarchy that the Canaanites were entirely subdued. Now the expression "was *then* in the land" would certainly imply that the account was not written until after they had been driven out. Since the Canaanites were there long after the time of Moses, it would seem likely that the story was written by someone who lived at a later date.

Further evidence that someone other than Moses must have done at least a part of the writing can be seen from the statement found in Chapter 12 of the Book of Numbers, "Now the man, Moses, was very meek, more than all men that were upon the face of the earth." If it were true that Moses was indeed the meekest of men, would he have made that statement concerning himself? It would be very well to have someone else say it about him, but really meek persons do not boast of their own humility. The statement offers no difficulty on the assumption that it was written by someone who belonged to a later generation, but it seems utterly inconsistent with the idea of Mosaic authorship.

Other facts which Spinoza found within the books themselves gave further support to this view. He was extremely cautious in drawing conclusions from the facts which he observed. He did not attempt to say who it was that wrote any one of the particular accounts. Neither did he give any specific dates for their composition. The result of his work was, however, of far greater significance than the mere questioning of the Mosaic authorship of these books. He had introduced to the modern world a scientific method for investigating problems pertaining to the Old Testament, and the application of this method was destined to bring about great changes in the generations which followed.

Eight years after the publication of Spinoza's *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus,* a French priest, Father Richard Simon, published a *Critical History of the Old Testament,* in which he agreed with Spinoza that Moses could not be regarded as the author of the Pentateuch. In addition to the points mentioned by Spinoza, he called attention to the fact that in the creation story of the first two chapters of Genesis there is a wide diversity in the style of writing which is used. Sometimes the style is curt and formal while at other times it is copious and flowing. This contrast in the style of writing is present even though the content of the material in each case is not something that would require this change. After calling attention to the differences in style, Father Simon pointed out that if one separates the material in which one style of writing occurs from the other contents of the two chapters, the result will be two complete accounts of the creation. These two accounts differ not only in their style of writing but there are several factual differences between them.

In the first account, man is made on the sixth day of the creation week. He is created by the Word of God, and it is in the image of God that male and female human beings are brought into existence. This creation takes place after the earth, the heavenly bodies, and the land and sea animals have been made. It is a kind of climax or crowning achievement in the whole work of creation. When we come to the second account we find the order of creation is reversed. Man is created first among all the living things. The other creatures are made afterward and they are created primarily for his service. Man is not created by divine fiat as was true in the former account. Instead of this, we are told

> then the LORD God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being. (Gen. 2:7)

An even greater contrast appears in the account of the creation of woman. Unlike the earlier story in which woman was created on an equality with man and made in the image of God, we are told she was created at a later time and for a strictly subordinate position. Her place was in some respects akin to that of the lower animals, for, according to this account, God caused all of the animals that had been made to pass in review before Adam, and He looked them over to see if any one of them was suited to be a helpmate for him. Finding no one of them suited for this purpose, God caused a deep sleep to come over Adam and while he was unconscious extracted a rib from his side and out of this rib created Eve. Obviously, she could not be regarded as the equal of Adam but rather as one who would serve his particular interests.

Father Richard Simon pointed out further that in Genesis we have not only two creation stories but also two stories concerning the great flood. On the basis of divergence in the style of writing it is possible to separate the materials concerning the flood into two accounts. Although the two stories will be seen to have something in common there are certain discrepancies between them. In one story Noah takes into the ark seven of each of the clean animals and only two of the unclean ones. In the other story he takes only two of each kind of animal without reference to their being of the clean or the unclean variety. In one story the waters which produced the flood came from above when it rained for forty days and nights. In the parallel story the fountains of the deep were broken and water came from that source. Again we find in one story that Noah and his family were in the ark one hundred and fifty days, and in the other story it was a full year.

The reason for the conflicting statements in the two creation stories and in the two flood stories was not explained by Father Simon. His chief contribution consisted in his analysis of the style of writing and in his conclusion that these differences in style indicated separate authorship for each one. This conclusion has been accepted by the majority of higher critics and it is at this point that we can see the real significance of his work. The next problem with which the critics were concerned had to do with the origin of the respective documents and the reasons for the discrepancies between them.

Meanwhile, further light on the authorship of the Pentateuch came from a new quarter. As early as 1753 a French Catholic layman named Jean Astruc had published a little volume entitled *Conjectures on the Original Memoirs Which It Appears That Moses Employed to Compose the Book of Genesis.* The title of the book is significant for it indicates that the author was convinced that Moses wrote the Pentateuch. He was merely trying to show how the facts pertaining to Genesis could be shown to be in harmony with this view. Astruc was a competent student of Hebrew and he had a scientific interest in the study of the Old Testament. He was employed as a consulting physician to Louis XV. One of the tasks assigned to him in this capacity was that of examining the Old Testament regulations pertaining to the use of clean and unclean meats. It was hoped that an investigation of this kind would bring to light some important dietary principles.

Astruc's researches carried him beyond this original purpose and he became curious about many of the things he found. One of these in particular interested him. It was the fact that in many instances there were duplicate accounts of the same event. A further examination of these accounts revealed that different names for the deity were employed in the narratives. Throughout the Book of Genesis, he found, in some places the deity was designated by the word *Elohim* and in other places God was known as *Yahweh*. For example, in the creation story as it is reported in Chapter 1 of Genesis, it is Elohim who created the heavens and the earth. In Chapter 2 of the same book there is another account of creation and here we are told that it was Yahweh who formed man out of the dust of the earth and who later created Eve from the rib of Adam. In the stories concerning the great flood, Elohim is the name for God in one account, and Yahweh is the name used in the other one. A similar use of these two names occurs in parallel stories throughout the entire book.

On the basis of these findings Astruc put together in a continuous narrative all of the material in which Elohim was used and he did the same thing for the materials in which Yahweh was employed. In addition to these exhibits he segregated ten minor sections which in his judgment could not be assigned to either of these documents. He regarded these sections as memoranda which were produced by different authors and which had been pieced together by Moses.

Following the work of Astruc, a new interpretation of these findings was presented in 1779 when Johann G. Eichhorn published a three-volume work entitled *Introduction to the Old Testament.* It was in the preface to the second printing of this book that the author gave to the science of biblical investigation the name "higher criticism" which has been used to designate this type of study ever since. Eichhorn was impressed by the fact that different names had been used in the parallel narratives, but he did not think it reasonable to assume that one and the same individual had used these names interchangeably. This assumption might be acceptable if the same conception of deity were indicated by both names. A careful study of the text showed beyond doubt that this was not the case. The Yahweh material describes the deity in anthropomorphic terms. He is like a man. In fact he resembles in many respects the typical chief of a primitive tribe. He possesses a physical body. He walks in the Garden of Eden during the "cool of the day." He talks with Adam and Eve concerning their sin in eating the forbidden fruit. He goes down to the land of Shinar to inspect the building of the tower of Babel so that he may see for himself what is being done. Elohim, on the other hand, appears to be a purely spiritual being. His dwelling place is in the heavens above the earth and he visits human beings through the experience of dreams and visions. His standards of right and wrong differ somewhat from the ones associated with the name of Yahweh. In general they represent a more advanced stage in ethical thinking.

Whenever the name Yahweh occurs it is associated with a particular style of writing. The Yahweh material contains the place names which belong to the Judean or southern kingdom and the conception of deity which is peculiar to it is well illustrated in the story of his forming man out of the dust of the earth and in the narrative concerning the tree of knowledge which was placed in the midst of the Garden of Eden. The

Elohim material has a peculiar style: it is associated with place names which belong to the Ephraimite or northern kingdom, and it reflects a more advanced conception of deity. God is presented as a transcendent being in this part of the literature. The work of creation culminates in the Sabbath institution, and in general the ideas which are portrayed represent a higher level of thinking. For these reasons Eichhorn drew the conclusion that in the Book of Genesis we have interwoven two separate and distinct documents originally produced by individuals who represent different periods in the historical development of the Hebrew people.

Eichhorn's successor at the University of Jena, Karl David Ilgen, continued the investigation of Genesis and concluded that the *Elohim* material should again be divided into two elements which he designated as the first and the second *Elohist* respectively. Unfortunately, Ilgen's book in which this thesis was expounded did not attract very much attention. The author's style was dry and prosaic and his book soon fell into obscurity. The argument which he presented was revived, however, about fifty years later when Hermann Hupfield, of the University of Halle, published a book called *The Sources of Genesis*. In this volume he pointed out the contrast which may be found in the different stories contained in the Elohim material. For example, there are two accounts of Jacob's journey into the land of Mesopotamia. In the first one Jacob is sent, on the advice of his father, to the home of his uncle in order to select a wife from his own people. He leaves home in a peaceful manner, is gone for many years, and on his return he helps his brother Esau to bury their aged father. In the second story we have a very different account. Jacob has deceived his father and secured the birthright which really belonged to his brother. Esau was angry and would have killed Jacob for this treacherous act had it not been for the intervention of their mother. It was at her suggestion that Jacob fled to Mesopotamia, not for the purpose of choosing a wife for himself, but to escape vengeance at the hands of his brother. On his return to the homeland, he finds that Esau is coming against him with an armed guard. At this point, Jacob sends gifts to Esau and thus brings about a reconciliation with him.

Similar contrasts were pointed out in connection with the naming of Bethel and in the changing of Jacob's name to Israel. Although Hupfield's work was concerned only with the Book of Genesis, the interpretation which he presented was soon extended to include other portions of the Pentateuch. The doctrine was popularized to a great extent when in 1862 an English bishop, John W. Colenso, published a book in which he pointed out that parts of Leviticus must have come from a period as late as the Babylonian captivity. One of the major results of his publication was the establishment of an approximate date for the writing of the second Elohist or what has come to be known as the late Priestly narrative.

Another important contribution to the documentary hypothesis had to do with the Book of Deuteronomy. In 1805 a young scholar named Wilhelm De Wette was studying at the University of Jena. To satisfy one of the requirements for an academic degree he submitted a treatise entitled *Discourse on Deuteronomy*. The major thesis which he set forth was that Deuteronomy belongs not to the time of Moses but to the period which preceded its discovery in the temple at Jerusalem in the year 621 B.C. The arguments in support of this position were drawn almost entirely from the Old Testament itself. One of them grew out of a study of the law of the central sanctuary, one of the most important statutes contained in the book. This law forbade the Hebrews to offer sacrifices at any place except the temple in Jerusalem. De Wette knew from reading other portions of the Old Testament that it had been customary to offer sacrifices at many local shrines and that an attempt was made during the reign of Josiah, king of Judah, to put an end to that practice. A narrative recorded in the Book of Kings told how the king had authorized a general cleansing of the temple. During the process of renovation a book had been discovered. It was taken to the king and read in his presence. The king was deeply moved by its contents and gave orders that its provisions should become at once a part of the law of the land. In connection with this reformatory movement all the outlying sanctuaries were closed and provision was made for having the sacrifices offered in the temple. De Wette believed the book discovered in the temple at this time was none other than the main portion of the Book of Deuteronomy. The laws contained in this book were written by disciples of the eighth-century prophets. They tried to preserve the teachings of these prophets by rewriting the laws of the land and by doing it in a way that would embody the ideals which they had proclaimed.

This hypothesis concerning the origin of Deuteronomy seemed to clear up a lot of problems concerning the contents of the book. It explained, for example, the laws pertaining to tenure of the land. One of the laws known as the *year of release* provided that at the end of every six years all property which had been taken to satisfy debts should be returned to its original owners. Such a law would seem quite inappropriate to the age of Moses when the Israelites were nomads and had no permanent home of their own. It would, however, have been quite appropriate to the age which preceded the reign of Josiah. Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, and Micah had protested vigorously against the economic system which enabled the rich to "add house to house and field to field," while the poor were forced to give up their possessions and live in a condition of servitude to those who held positions of power and prestige. A law such as the year of release would be an attempt to set things right by giving to the poor and exploited class a chance to have their debts forgiven so that they might start over again.

Laws pertaining to the relationship between rulers and their subjects, the administration of justice, the establishment of cities of refuge for those who had been falsely accused, and provision for the poor and needy, were appropriate for the conditions which prevailed during the seventh century B.C., but they would have had little or no meaning for people who lived during the age of Moses. It is true that within the book itself there are laws attributed to Moses, but De Wette explained this fact as a literary device which credited the whole body of Israel's laws to the one supreme lawgiver. A modern parallel to this procedure can be seen in the way in which a recent and up-to-date dictionary is credited to Noah Webster even though he died long before this edition of the dictionary was published. The purpose of attributing the laws of Deuteronomy to Moses was to indicate that the spirit of Israel's first great lawgiver was carried on in the legislation which belonged to a later period.

Summary of the Documentary Hypothesis

Our brief sketch of the way in which the methods of higher criticism were applied to the study of the Pentateuch is far from complete. Many scholars whose names we have not mentioned made important contributions and there were many arguments in addition to the ones we have mentioned. Although universal agreement has never been reached on all these points, there has been a general acceptance on the part of biblical scholars that at least four separate and distinct narratives have been included in the composition of the first six books of our present Old Testament. Further, it is believed that it is possible to locate with a fair degree of accuracy the period when each one of them was written, and to name the general characteristics which distinguish each narrative. It is true that among some of the more conservative religious groups the use of the scientific method of studying the Scriptures has never been accepted. There is no point in trying to convince them that they should use it, since all argumentation is a form of reasoning and they do not believe human reasoning can be relied upon to give one the real truth. Among those who do accept this method, there is general agreement that the first six books of the Old Testament or the *Hexateuch* is a composite work including four separate documents which may be described as follows:

1. The Early Judean History. This narrative begins with the account of creation as it is reported in Chapter 2 of Genesis.[7] It can be traced through the Books of Genesis, Exodus, Numbers, and Joshua. It is a story of the Hebrew people placed in the setting of a world history. It develops what the author of this narrative regards as the most significant events from the

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[7] R. H. Pfeiffer believes the *J* narrative begins with Gen. 12. See his *Introduction to the Old Testament, op. cit.,* pp. 141-42.

time of creation to the establishment of the Hebrew nation in the land of Canaan. We do not know this author's name or the exact time of writing, but there are good reasons for believing that the history was written about 850 B.C. by a prophet or group of prophets living in the southern kingdom. It has been customary to refer to this document by the letter *J*. There are two reasons why this letter has been selected. The first one is that the history belongs to the southern kingdom which was also known as Judah. The other one is that Yahweh, sometimes translated as *Jehovah,* is the name used to designate the deity. Since *J* is the first letter in Judah and also in Jehovah, it has seemed appropriate to use it in referring both to the author and to the narrative itself.

The tracing of this history through the early books of the Old Testament is made possible by certain general characteristics which may be found in the various portions of literature which belong to it. We have already mentioned the fact that we have in this document not only a peculiar name for the deity but peculiar characteristics as well. He is an anthropomorphic deity with a nature which stands in sharp contrast with the conceptions of a later period. Both in his dealings with the Hebrews and with the so-called foreigners he does not hesitate to do things which are contrary to later standards and ideals. The place names which occur in this narrative are ones which belong to the Judean kingdom. The ethical ideals expressed in it, although based on the notion of obedience to Yahweh, are not so well developed as the ones found in later literature. For example, the position of women, the treatment of slaves, and the general attitude toward human life are all points where the contrast between earlier and later notions of right and wrong are particularly evident.

The stories contained in *J* constitute a complete and integrated narrative. Taken as a whole the history has a very definite meaning. It indicates the author's conception of the divine purpose in history, and the way in which this purpose has been carried out in spite of the many obstacles that might have prevented its full realization.

2. The Ephraimite History. This narrative starts with the story of the migrations of Abraham as recorded in Chapter 15 of the Book of Genesis. From this point on it covers approximately the same period of time as we have in the Judean history. It is, however, written from a different point of view. The author is a native of the northern kingdom. He is interested in the lives of Israel's heroes and he wants to impress his readers with the idea of obedience to the commands of the deity. We do not know his name nor the exact time when he wrote or put together the parts of this history. The approximate date which is usually given for this narrative is 750 B.C. and it is believed to have been written by a prophet of the northern kingdom. The author is referred to by the letter *E* and the same designation is applied to the history which he wrote. The appropriateness of this letter can be seen from the fact that it is the first letter in the word Ephraim and also in the word Elohim. Both of these names are directly associated with this narrative. The deity is known as Elohim and the name Ephraim is often used interchangeably with Israel or the northern kingdom.

According to this narrative the deity was designated by the word Elohim until the time of Moses, after which it was combined with the name Yahweh. More important than the name which was used is the concept of God associated with it. There is an absence of the anthropomorphism which was characteristic of the *J* narrative. In its place we find a more exalted spiritual conception. This is further reflected in the ethical ideals that are closely associated with the idea of loyalty to God.

The author's purpose is to encourage strict obedience to the commands which God has given to his people. He is especially interested in the eradication of idol worship among the Hebrews. He tells stories that are designed to make idol worship appear ridiculous. He hopes in this way that people will no longer be able to take them seriously. A great deal of interest centers in the lives of Israel's heroes. It is here that one finds illustrations of the divine purpose being realized in human history.

3. The Deuteronomic Narrative. This document includes the major portion of our present Book of Deuteronomy. It is

assigned to the period just prior to 621 B.C. when the book of the law was discovered in the temple at Jerusalem. The narrative is primarily a lawbook written to make concrete the spirit and ideals of the eighth-century prophets. During the reign of Manasseh, king of Judah, a reaction had set in against the prophets and the reformatory movements which they inaugurated. Some of the prophets were put to death and others fled from Jerusalem. While they were in hiding they wanted to do something to preserve the teachings which were now so unpopular in their capital city. The method which they employed was that of rewriting the body of laws which had been handed down from ancient times. New laws were added and old ones were expanded and reinterpreted. When they had completed their task they waited for an opportune moment; when it came they went back to Jerusalem and "lost" their book in the temple. During a renovation of the building it was "discovered" and taken to the king. He listened to the reading of it and proclaimed that it was the word of Yahweh and should be incorporated in the law of the land. This took place in the year 621 B.C. It was at that time that the law of the central sanctuary, one of the most prominent laws of Deuteronomy, was first recognized as obligatory by the Hebrew people.

In addition to a body of laws designed to correct the more flagrant injustices of that period, the book contains an important hortatory introduction which sets forth the spirit and purpose for which the laws were written. This introduction is now included in Chapters 5 to 11 of Deuteronomy. Again the name of the author or authors of this book is unknown. The letter *D* is therefore used to designate this narrative in the same way that *J* and *E* are used in connection with the two older ones.

4. THE LATE PRIESTLY NARRATIVE. This narrative is so named because it was written from the point of view of the priests whose interpretations concerning the meaning of religion were dominant in the period which followed the return from the Babylonian exile. The distinguishing characteristics of this narrative stand out more clearly than those which belong to the preceding histories. The style of writing is formal and precise.

The author is interested in the exact time when specific events took place. He records the particular activities which belonged to each day of the creation week. He tells us how long each one of a whole list of patriarchs lived, and he states the exact time when Noah and his family entered the ark. He reports the duration of the flood, and he gives statistical information about the exodus from the land of Egypt. He is interested in the duties and prerogatives of the priesthood and in many instances presents a detailed account of the services performed.

The narrative begins with the creation story as it is recorded in Chapter 1 of Genesis. It closes with the account of the establishment of the Hebrews in the land of Canaan that we find in our present Book of Joshua. One of the major purposes of the narrative is to present the more important religious institutions in their proper historical perspective. The Sabbath is the most ancient of these institutions. It goes back to the very creation of the world where it appears as a kind of climax to the work of God in bringing the earth and all its creatures into existence. The prohibition of the eating of blood goes back to the time of Noah. The rite of circumcision was introduced by Abraham, and it was Moses who first instituted the service known as the Passover. By showing the ancient origin of these institutions the author, whom we designate by the letter *P,* hoped to impress his contemporaries with their importance and thus win allegiance to them.

The conception of deity which finds expression in this document presents a striking contrast to the Yahweh of the early Judean history. There is an absence of the type of anthropomorphism illustrated in *J*'s stories and in its place we find an exalted and spiritual concept. God is presented as the omnipotent ruler of the universe. His word is sufficient for the creation of the various things that were made. He has power to intervene in the affairs of men and he does not hesitate to do so whenever it will aid in the fulfilment of his purpose. He communicates with human beings directly and there is little mention of the media through which contact is established in other portions of the Old Testament literature.

The ethical ideals of the *P* narrative are the ones which characterized post-Exilic Judaism. The recognized moral standards show considerable advance over those which prevailed during the early period of the monarchy. The lives of Israel's heroes are idealized through the omission of acts and consequences which are found in preceding stories. The heart of morality consists of strict obedience to the commands of God. The commands include moral requirements as well as the performance of religious rites and ceremonies. The main emphasis, however, is placed on the latter, probably for the reason that they are more easily enforced. It was this emphasis on the ritualistic rather than the moral side of religion which tended to bring about the formalism that was so prominent in later Judaism.

Chapter 3

THE CANAANITE BACKGROUND

Since the literature of any people is to a considerable extent conditioned by the experiences through which they have passed, our best approach to an understanding of the early Old Testament writings will be through an historical survey of the times and conditions out of which that literature was produced. For our purpose the history of the Hebrew people may be said to begin with the story of their oppression in the land of Egypt and their subsequent exodus from that country. There is very little definitely known about them prior to that time. How long they had lived in Canaan before going to Egypt and what had been their relationship to the other peoples of that land are questions about which we can only form conjectures. That the Hebrews had lived in Canaan before going to Egypt seems evident from the many traditions that have survived. However, we know little concerning the origin, the manner of their life, or the character of the religion of the various tribes prior to their residence in Egypt.

Inasmuch as the historical period of the development of the Hebrew religion took place on the soil of Canaan, it is here that we must look for those conditions and circumstances with which they came in contact during those early years when their religious ideas were first being formulated. A brief survey of the Canaanite religion as it existed prior to the time of the Hebrew exodus, and during the period when they were becoming established in the land, will be sufficient for a general background from which we may infer the character of the Hebrew religion during the earlier phases of its development. The religious ideals of any people are usually influenced a great deal by the beliefs and customs of those with whom they associate. In this respect we may be sure that the Hebrews were no exception. While the course of Hebrew history shows repeated contacts with the Egyptians and the Babylonians, it was with the Canaanites that they were most constantly associated during those years when their religious ideals were being developed. The history of the Hebrew religion shows familiarity with the customs and ceremonies of their Canaanite neighbors, although the development of their own literature shows contrast with, as well as assimilation of, many of the beliefs and practices that were common among the Canaanites.

There are many reasons for believing that the worship of Jehovah or Yahweh was introduced to the Hebrews by Moses. For instance, this is the testimony given by the author of the Ephraimite history as it is recorded in Exodus.[1] Here the writer tells us that Moses was met by Yahweh during a very impressive experience which took place on the plains of Midian. At this time Yahweh told him of the work he was to do in order to deliver Israel from its oppression in Egypt. Prior to this time, according to the narrative, the Hebrews had worshiped other gods but from this time forward Yahweh was their god. It is true that in the Judean history which was written a century earlier we are told that Yahweh had been worshiped by the Hebrews long before their descent into Egypt. In fact, it was with Enosh, the grandson of Adam, that men first began to call on his name.[2] However, the author of this history is in agreement with the Ephraimite narrative in making it clear that a new impetus was given to Yahweh worship by Moses, and we may be sure that the work of Moses gave to the name of Yahweh a new meaning and significance.[3]

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[1] Exod. 3.

[2] Gen. 4:26.

[3] Throughout this book, with the exception of the materials which are quoted from the Revised Standard Version of the Holy Bible, Yahweh is used as the Hebrew name for God. In the Hebrew text which contained no vowels the name of the deity was YHWH. It is not known for certain just how this name was pronounced but there seems to be good reasons for believing it was Yāhwêh. In time the Hebrews became very much concerned about the use of this word lest they give offense to the deity by mispronouncing it. So, instead of saying "Yahweh" they used the term "Adonai" which means "Lord." In the course of time the two words "Yahweh" and "Adonai" were combined into "Jehovah" and this is the name which appears in the American Standard Version of the Holy Bible. In the

It is difficult to estimate with any degree of accuracy the place and work of Moses. All that we know about him is what may legitimately be inferred from the surviving traditions concerning him, and the necessity for such a figure made by the known facts of Hebrew history. However, these sources would indicate that he was a gifted organizer and religious leader.

The religious conceptions which Moses gave to his people when they left Egypt and migrated to Canaan were sufficient to arouse the loyalty of the various Hebrew tribes and to prompt them to unite their efforts in a common cause. Without this religious element to bind them together it is doubtful whether they would have been able to survive the conflicts which arose with their powerful Canaanite neighbors. The worship of Yahweh which bound the Hebrews together during this early period must have been due, in large measure at least, to the work of Moses. So far as we can determine, he was the first great prophet or leader of his people. It seems probable that he, more than anyone else, was responsible for the origin and promulgation of the idea of a covenant relationship existing between Yahweh and his people.

Although Moses' conception of Yahweh was original in some respects, it had much in common with the religious ideas that were current in his day. It is a mistake to suppose that the founder of a new system of religion must work entirely independent of the customs and ideas that are prevalent in the country in which he lives. On the contrary, he usually begins with these customs and displays his own originality by making modifications as he finds them necessary. The early literature of the Old Testament indicates that the Mosaic contribution to Hebrew religion was achieved in this manner. For this reason some familiarity with the religious beliefs and practices of the Canaanites prior to their contact with the Hebrews will help us to understand not only the work of Moses but the religious movement inaugurated by him.

King James Version the term "Lord" is used and this practice has been followed in the Revised Standard Version. Since one of the main purposes of this book is to trace the development of the Hebrew conception of God it seems best to use the term "Yahweh."

The Religion of the Canaanites

As far back as the third millennium B.C. and possibly much earlier, the inhabitants of Canaan worshiped the spirits of ancestors and other forms of nonhuman creatures. Until comparatively recent times our information concerning the culture of the early Canaanites was rather meager and based almost entirely on a study of stone monuments and other relics which had been discovered in that part of the country. During the last few decades our knowledge of the beliefs and practices of these people has been greatly enriched through the archeological research carried on in various parts of Palestine.[4] An important contribution that has come to light is the translation and interpretation of the Ras Shamra tablets. Ras Shamra is the name of a city on the coast of Syria. In ancient times it was known as Ugarit. By the end of the twelfth century B.C. it was destroyed and its remains were buried until 1928 when the city was again discovered. In the ancient city of Ugarit there were two temples dedicated to the gods known as Baal and Dagon. Between these buildings there was a library which contained hundreds of clay tablets. A large number of these tablets have been recovered and translations have been made of the inscriptions found on them. In fact it has been possible on the basis of these findings to reconstruct a Ugaritic Grammar and to learn many interesting things about the life and religious beliefs of the Canaanites prior to the time when the Hebrews made their first permanent entrance into the land. The writings found on these tablets are assigned to the fifteenth and fourteenth centuries B.C. They consist chiefly of epic poems about gods and heroes recognized by the people who lived at that time. This literature is of particular interest to students of the Old Testament because of the many striking parallels to the ideas and beliefs found in the later writings of the Hebrew people. One finds the names of some of the Canaanite deities that are mentioned in the Old Testament. Worship of the serpent goddess, the sacrificial offering of a pig, the giving of the first-born, the boiling of a kid in its mother's milk, the pouring of libations, the practice of the sacred dance, the offering of human sacrifices, and many other ritualistic performances all belonged to the early religion of the Canaanites.

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[4] References on Old Testament archeology include the following: G. A. Barton, *Archaeology and the Bible,* 7th ed. (Philadelphia: American Sunday School Union, 1937). Jack Finegan, *Light from the Ancient Past* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1946). G. E. Wright and F. V. Filson, *The Westminster Historical Atlas to the Bible* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1945). W. F. Albright, *The Archaeology of Palestine* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1949); *From the Stone Age to Christianity* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1940); *Archaeology and the Religion of Israel* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1942). Cyrus H. Gordon, *The Living Past* (New York: John Day Co., Inc., 1941). Julian Obermann, *Ugaritic Mythology* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1948).

An important part of the ritual consisted of the offerings made to the spirits whose dwellings were in many different places, usually near some spring or perhaps on a rock or mountain. These spirits, it was believed, controlled the forces of nature. Hence, the preservation of life was dependent on securing their favor. The spring spirit, for example, should he become angry, might cause the water to be unfit to drink or even dry up the source of supply altogether. In the same manner the tree spirit or any one of those spirits having to do with the forces of fertility might bring suffering and destruction to the land. The only way human beings could prosper in the presence of these spirits was to win their favor. This was the purpose of the offerings. Drink offerings consisting of oil, wine, or even human blood would be placed in dishes or appropriate receptacles and left for the spirits to consume at their leisure. Choice bits of food were doubtless included as a part of the gift or offering made to the spirit. These offerings of food and drink constitute, in all probability, the oldest form of sacrifice on the soil of Canaan.

Closely associated with these sacrificial offerings and forming a part of the worship of the spirits was the custom of taboo. People were made to refrain from contact with certain objects over which the spirits were believed to exercise control. Dead bodies, certain kinds of meat, portions of the harvest, and factors having to do with the processes of birth, death, and important periods in life might be declared taboo and a penalty inflicted should the custom be violated. It is reasonable to suppose that in this custom of taboo can be found a source for the ideas of *clean* and *unclean* meats which are mentioned frequently in the Old Testament writings.

The Hebrews never accepted openly the worship of the spirits and nature deities which they found among the Canaanites. They tried repeatedly to eliminate from the land everything that pertained to the worship of any god other than Yahweh. Nevertheless, the influence of the Canaanite beliefs and practices can be seen in the later development of religious ideas among the Hebrews. Customs that were originally associated with the worship of nature deities were taken over by the Hebrews and new reasons assigned for their observance. In this way we can account for not only the ideas of clean and unclean but many of the other prohibitions which came to be associated with Yahweh worship.

Later the spirits and demons worshiped by the older Canaanites were superseded by more dignified beings known as gods. We have no way of knowing just how early the worship of these gods was established in Canaan. They were probably worshiped there as early as 3000 B.C. The most important of the Canaanite deities, at the time when the Hebrews entered the land following their exodus from Egypt, were known as the *baalim*.[5] The singular term *baal* meant "possessor of the land." It was this characteristic which differentiated the baal deities from the older nature spirits of the land. Originally baal was a generic name and could be applied to any one of a large number of gods. In fact, there seems to have been a baal for almost every important place in the land.

Like many of the Babylonian and Egyptian deities the baal gods had a consort or female counterpart who was known as *baalah* the female name for possessor. In the course of time when Baal had become not simply a generic title but a proper name and was used to designate an individual god who represented at the same time the genus or basic principle involved in each local baal, the baalah acquired the name *Ashtart* and was worshiped as the goddess whose chief function was that of presiding over the forces of fertility in both man and beast. The forces of reproduction which these people considered as sacred were so filled with mystery that they could be explained only by the presence of some deity presiding over them. The worship of Ashtart was frequently of a degrading character. Men and women would become consecrated to her service by giving themselves to prostitution. Thus the worship of a creative force, pure in itself, was given over to the animal instincts and usually with devastating results. The goddess Ashtart is frequently mentioned in the Old Testament. Her worship is strongly condemned by many of the Hebrew writers. They tried hard to keep the worship of Yahweh free from those licentious practices carried on by the devotees of Baal and Ashtart. They were not, however, always successful in their attempt. The prophets found it necessary on many occasions to protest vigorously against the adultery which had become a part of the worship performed among the Israelites.

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[5] See Karl Budde, *Religion of Israel to the Exile* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1899). See also E. W. K. Mould, *Essentials of Bible History* (New York: The Ronald Press Co., 1950), chaps. viii-ix.

The fertility gods, Baal and Ashtart, once they were established in Canaan, became the leading deities in that place. While the influence of foreign gods from Babylon and Egypt continued to be felt for some time, it was baal worship that became indigenous to the land. The Hebrew writers paid more attention to it than they did to any other form of Canaanite religion. The worship of the baal deities demanded a more elaborate ritual than the older inhabitants had used in connection with the worship of spirits. For one thing, the burning of the sacrifice was now inaugurated. It was not enough, as in the case of the older forms of worship, to put the offering in a dish or on a flat rock and wait for the spirits to remove it themselves. These deities, believed to have the power of creation and to dwell not merely in the land but in the heavens above the land, could be reverenced properly only by having the sacrificial gift ascend to them by means of smoke and the odors which would issue from the place of burning. The smell of burnt flesh was thought to be especially pleasing to the deity.

The place of the sacrifice was also an important factor in the worship of these gods. Instead of placing the gift in close proximity to a spring or perhaps tying it to the limbs of a tree, it was now considered necessary to erect an altar on which the offering could be placed after it had been prepared for the burning. As the sacrificial smoke would ascend toward heaven it was understood that the favor of the gods would be secured for the worshipers. In addition to this function the sacrifice also served as an occasion for feasting and the performance of various rites and ceremonies. The eating of the sacrificial meal afforded an opportunity for the worshipers to realize the presence of the deity and to enter into some form of communion with him. The state of ecstasy that would result from the drinking of wine or some other cause of a similar nature would be interpreted as a manifestation of the presence of the deity within the person of the individual who was thus affected.

The chief Canaanite festivals were those associated with the processes of agriculture. They had to do with the sowing of the fields and the gathering of the crops. In the spring of the year, at the time of the sowing of the grain, at the beginning of the harvest, and again when the fruit was gathered in the late autumn, the people would come to their respective places of worship and make offerings to Baal, thus seeking his blessing on the fields that were being sown or rendering thanks for the good things which they had already received at his hand. Besides the regular yearly feasts many smaller gatherings of less importance were held. The rite of circumcision administered at the time when the young men were initiated into manhood was an occasion for religious feasting and, judging from the Old Testament reference to the "hill of the fore-skins," we would conclude that this service took place on certain hills that were consecrated for that purpose. We read, too, of dance festivals in which maidens participated probably in honor of Ashtart. Marriage festivals were also held and it was not uncommon for religious feasts to take place in connection with the making of a contract or the taking of an oath. The story of Abraham's covenant with Yahweh is a good illustration of the way in which the latter custom was eventually taken over by the Hebrews.

This, in brief, was the religion which the Hebrews found in Canaan when they entered the land following their experience in

Egypt. The extent to which the customs and ideas of the new land influenced the development of their own religion is reflected in many of the early narratives of the Old Testament.

The Beginnings of Yahweh Worship

When Moses became the leader of his people in Egypt, inspiring them to revolt against the oppression of the Egyptian Pharaoh, he appeared as the representative of Yahweh whom he declared to be the god of the Hebrews, the one who would be their deliverer from Egypt and who would forever champion their cause. Since Moses seems to have been the first one to identify Yahweh as the god of the Hebrews there are two questions which naturally arise: "How did Moses first learn about Yahweh?" and "What was the character of Yahweh prior to this time?" The conflicting statements found in the Old Testament narratives that deal with the work of Moses make it difficult to answer these questions with any degree of accuracy. According to the Judean history, Yahweh had been worshiped by the patriarchs long before the descent into Egypt. He is referred to as "the god of the fathers." [6] The Ephraimite history written a century later tells us that Yahweh worship was first introduced to the Hebrews by Moses.[7] Prior to this time the ancestors had worshiped other gods. Their religion had been polytheistic. Modern scholarship recognizes that both of these accounts are centuries removed from the events they are supposed to record. For this reason they cannot be relied on in every respect to supply accurate historical information. They must be interpreted in the light of those conditions that prevailed at the times when they were written. Even though these traditions cannot be relied on in every detail there is a strong probability that they were based on actual occurrences. The patriarchal heroes whom they describe were in all likelihood real individuals whose experiences had constituted important factors in the lives of the Hebrew people prior to the descent into Egypt. We may be sure that these characters were idealized by later generations and because of the many traditions associated with their names the real men who actually lived have become obscured to us. Even so, we are justified in believing that the long revered names of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, and others stood for real individuals who actually lived on the soil of Canaan and whose achievements and powers of leadership marked them as the greatest men of their race and time.

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[6] Exod. 3:16.
[7] Exod. 3:13-14.

Further evidence for the existence of these patriarchs is shown by the fact that though the authors of the Judean and Ephraimite narratives lived in different countries and were separated in time by at least a century, their stories concerning the ancestors of Israel are in essential agreement. Then, too, the narratives are marked by great sobriety of statement. Very few unreasonable claims are made for any of the patriarchs although many such claims would likely have been made about purely fictitious characters.

In spite of *J*'s declaration that Yahweh was the "god of the fathers" whom the patriarchs had worshiped for centuries, it is probably true that the Hebrew ancestors prior to the time of Moses had known very little of him. The stories that are related of his dealings with the early patriarchs reveal a deity who was so kind and beneficent that he can hardly be identified with the Yahweh of Moses. What seems more likely is that the patriarchs had worshiped one of the Canaanite deities. Indeed, they may have worshiped several of them. At any rate this idea accords well with the statements of the *E* narrative in which the writer describes the worship of the Israelite fathers as being polytheistic. *J*'s use of the expression "god of the fathers" suggests very strongly that the Hebrew patriarchs had singled out from among the numerous Canaanite deities some special one whom they worshiped as a sort of *summus deus*. The identification of this Canaanite god with the Yahweh of Mosaic and post-Mosaic times can easily be explained as the work of a later writer who was himself a worshiper of Yahweh and who was also genuinely convinced that this same Yahweh was the god whom his ancestors had worshiped from time immemorial.

Very little is known with certainty concerning the character of Yahweh prior to the time of Moses. Various theories have been put forth by different writers who have tried to show some connection between him and the older gods of the Arabian peninsula. According to one of these Yahweh had been a moon-god. The name of Abraham's wife is said to be similar to if not identical with the title given to the moon-goddess who resided at Harran the place where Abraham went after he had been called upon to leave Ur of the Chaldees. Again, it is pointed out that Yahweh dwelt in Sinai, a mountain that may have been named after the Babylonian moon-god *Sin*. The feast of the new moon was always one of the most important festivals in connection with the worship of Yahweh, and this fact is thought to lend further support to the same theory.

According to another view, Yahweh was originally a volcano god. In support of this idea reference has been made to the story concerning the condition of Mount Sinai at the time when Yahweh gave the laws to Moses.

> And Mount Sinai was wrapped in smoke, because the LORD descended upon it in fire; and the smoke of it went up like the smoke of a kiln, and the whole mountain quaked greatly. (Exod. 19:18)

The story of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah states that these cities were destroyed with *fire and brimstone,* and is thought to indicate still further a connection between Yahweh and the god of volcanic activity. Large beds of volcanic rock have been found in Arabia, and it is not unreasonable to suppose that some of the volcanic peaks in this region were active during the times of the early Hebrew patriarchs. However, the references which seem to connect Yahweh with volcanic activity are few and these can hardly be considered as sufficient to account fully for the origin of Yahweh worship. It is more probable that Yahweh was thought to have extended his power to include volcanic activity but was never identified with the volcano god himself.

A third theory maintains that Yahweh was at one time a storm-god. Many passages from the Old Testament can be cited in which Yahweh is presented in close connection with a cloud or a storm. For example, in the story of the Battle of Megiddo which is recorded in Chapter 5 of the Book of Judges we are told "the stars in their courses fought against Sisera." This is interpreted to mean that Yahweh brought deliverance to his people by sending a great storm which made the soil on the battlefield so soft that the horses and chariots of the enemy could not be used to good advantage. Again, it was in the midst of a terrific storm encircling Mount Sinai that the law was given to Moses. When the Israelites were marching in the wilderness they were guided in their journeyings by a "pillar of cloud" that led them by day and a "pillar of fire" that led them by night. It was a cloud resting above the tabernacle that gave to the people the assurance that Yahweh was still with them. Further evidence of Yahweh's connection with the storm may be adduced from the fact that the Babylonian god Adad who had much in common with the Yahweh of the early Canaanite period is frequently pictured with a thunderbolt in his hand.

According to still another theory which is more widely accepted at the present time than any of the previous ones that have been mentioned, Yahweh was the god of the Kenites before he became the god of the people of Israel.[8] The Kenites were one of the tribes belonging to the Midianites, a comparatively small group of people who lived in the region of the Sinaitic peninsula. Their origin was more directly Arabian than that of the Hebrews. They lived a pastoral life, and it was among them that Moses had sojourned for a period of years just prior to the time when Yahweh appeared to him and commissioned him to deliver the people of Israel from the oppression under which they had been suffering. The main arguments which are usually employed in support of this story may be summarized briefly as follows:

1. It was while tending his flocks near Mount Sinai (Horeb) after he had lived for some time among the Midianites that Yahweh appeared to Moses and told him that he was walking on holy ground. It was here in the vicinity of this sacred mountain that Yahweh revealed his name to Moses and made clear to him his concern for the people of Israel. Before this revela-

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[8] See Karl Budde, *op. cit.*, Lect. 2. See also G. A. Barton, *Studies in the History of Religion Presented to C. H. Toy.* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1912), pp. 203-4.

tion, the name of Yahweh had been unknown to the Hebrews. It is true that the authors of the early Judean and the late Priestly narratives do maintain some connection between Yahweh and the god whom the patriarchs had worshiped. However, the statement found in Exod. 6:3

> "I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as God Almighty, but by my name the LORD I did not make myself known to them."

indicates clearly that Yahweh's name was first given to the Hebrews through Moses. Since the introduction of a new name usually meant the introduction of a new deity, we may conclude that Moses was really introducing the worship of a new god to his people. The connection of this deity with the "god of the fathers" may well have been the work of a later writer who expressed the point of view of the day in which he lived. This explanation accords well with the statement found in Josh. 24:14 where the Israelites are admonished to

> "Now therefore fear the LORD, and serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness; put away the gods which your fathers served beyond the River, and in Egypt, and serve the LORD."

2. According to the record found in Exod. 18:12 it was Jethro, the father-in-law of Moses, who offered the first sacrifices to Yahweh in which the Hebrews participated. Now Jethro was a Midianite priest and the fact that he took the lead in making this sacrificial offering to Yahweh while Moses, Aaron and the elders of Israel were present, but only participated in the feast, is a strong indication that Jethro was initiating Moses and his fellow Hebrews into the ritual of a new worship. It was shortly after this sacrificial feast that the covenant relationship between Yahweh and Israel was established.

3. For centuries, Mount Sinai (Horeb is another name for Sinai), a mountain located in the land of the Midianites was regarded as the home of Yahweh. In the song of Deborah it is stated that *Yahweh came forth from Sinai* to give victory to the Israelites in their battle against the Canaanites (Judg. 5:4-5). Again in Deut. 33:2 we are told that

"The Lord came from Sinai,
and dawned from Seir upon us;
he shone forth from Mount Paran,
he came from the ten thousands of holy ones,
with flaming fire at his right hand."

It was at Sinai that Yahweh called Moses into the mount and gave to him the tables of stone on which were written the words of the law. When Elijah was fleeing the wrath of Jezebel he found no peace of mind until he came to Mount Horeb which was the mount of God (I Kings 19:8).

4. The Kenites were champions of Yahweh worship when the Hebrews came into Canaan and their friendly attitude toward the Israelites continued for several centuries. An early example of their devotion to Yahweh may be seen in the case of Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite. As the defeated Sisera was fleeing from the scene of battle where his forces had been routed by the Israelites, he came to the tent where Jael was living. When he asked for a drink she gave him a bowl of milk and then when his head was bent over she killed him by driving a tent pin into his skull. Her act seems to have been prompted by a desire to be loyal to the god whom her own people had worshiped and who was now more definitely associated with the welfare of the Hebrew people. The opposition of the Kenites to the Canaanite baal worship and their friendly attitude toward the god of Israel is shown again by the way in which Jonadab, the son of Rechab the Kenite, aided Jehu in the eradication of baal worship from the land of Israel (II Kings 10:15). For centuries the descendants of Jonadab, later known as the Rechabites, remained faithful to the worship of Yahweh. Jeremiah was especially impressed by their loyalty. Shortly before the fall of Jerusalem he called attention to their faithfulness in contrast to the faithlessness of the people of Judah.

5. Not only were the Kenites friendly to the people of Israel during the period of their migrations and their early settlement in Canaan, but some of them evidently joined the Hebrews and settled with them in different parts of the land. In the days of Saul their relationship to the Israelites was amiable for Saul took special care to protect them before making his descent upon

the Amalekites. After the death of Saul when David was trying to unite the scattered tribes, he included the Kenites among those to whom he sent presents thus hoping to secure their loyalty as subjects in his kingdom. This fusion of the Kenites with the Hebrews who lived in the south may explain in part the teaching found in the Judean history which makes the worship of Yahweh almost as ancient as the creation of man.

On the basis of these considerations we may say that the evidence is sufficient to warrant the belief that the Yahweh whom Moses introduced to his people at the time when they left Egypt was the same god who had previously been worshiped by the Kenites. This view of the beginnings of Yahweh worship should not be interpreted to detract in any way from the originality of the Hebrews or to minimize the conception of deity which was eventually developed by them. The greatness of the Hebrew contribution lies in the transformation given to the idea of Yahweh rather than the source from which they received their earliest conception of him. No sooner had Yahweh come to be associated with the Hebrews than certain important differences began to appear. In the first place Yahweh's connection with the Hebrews was not due to any kinship between himself and them. He had entered into a voluntary agreement with them and this meant that he was free to forsake them at any time when they failed to live up to the terms of their agreement with him. Again, Yahweh's concern for the Hebrew people and the use of his power in their behalf was something which could inspire on their part a deep sense of gratitude for what he had done. If the Yahweh worshiped by the Kenites had not possessed any moral qualities, this does not mean that the Yahweh whom the Hebrews came to know would be conceived in the same manner. Yahweh's relation to the people of Israel provided an opportunity for ethical development which in time surpassed anything that could be found in the religious life of surrounding nations.

The Conquest of Canaan

The establishment of the Hebrews in the land of Canaan was not accomplished all at once nor was it the result of any single military campaign. Our information concerning their conquest of the land is derived largely from Joshua, Judges and I Samuel. Recent archeological researches have thrown considerable light on the history of this period.[9] An examination of the Old Testament records indicates that they were written a long time after the events mentioned took place and they represent an apologetic point of view. The authors wanted to emphasize the idea that Israel's troubles were due to apostasy from the worship of Yahweh. Many of the stories which they used had been in existence for a long time but the organization of these stories and the interpretation of their meaning was the work of the authors themselves.

Archeologists have recently discovered ruins of the ancient city of Jericho. According to the Old Testament narratives, the conquest of Canaan began with the capture of this city. On the basis of inscriptions which they have found archeologists believe the city was destroyed some time near 1400 B.C. Since this date is considerably earlier than the one usually given for the exodus from Egypt, it seems reasonable to believe that the conquest of Canaan was undertaken by certain of the Hebrew peoples long before others from their number had migrated to Egypt. The presentation of the story concerning the capture of the city as though it had taken place at a much later date can easily be understood as the work of a later historian who simply put in order the traditions which had made the most vivid impressions on his mind. At any rate we may be sure the conquest of the land lasted over a long period of time with different tribes settling in various parts of the country. The ruthless barbaric nature of the conquest is described in certain parts of the Book of Joshua.[10]

The Hebrews, in spite of their numbers and military strength, would probably have been unable to gain possession of the land had it not been that the Canaanites were weakened by wars with the Egyptians and the Hittites. The organization of the Canaanites into little city-states gave them an advantage over the Hebrews. On the other hand the Hebrews, who were inclined to dwell among the hills and in the rougher parts of the country, employed a strategy that the Canaanites living on the fertile plains were unable to match.

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[9] See E. W. K. Mould, *Essentials of Bible History* (New York: The Ronald Press Co., 1950), chap. x.

[10] Especially Josh. 10, 11, 12.

Along with the military conquest of Canaan there was a cultural transformation that had an important effect on the life and religious ideals of the Hebrew people. Although the invaders were able to subdue the military power of the Canaanites, they were influenced a great deal by the culture of the people whom they found in possession of the land. In this way the life of the Hebrews was changed through the acquisition of many characteristics they had not possessed during the nomadic period of their existence.

One of the ways in which this change found expression can be seen in the demand for a king to rule over the people. When the Hebrews began the settlement of Canaan there was no spirit of national unity, apart from their religious loyalties, to bind them together. Largely as a result of their bitter experience in Egypt they had learned to hate oppression. They had come to believe that each individual is the possessor of certain rights which no one, not even a king, can take from him. This belief was strengthened by the consciousness that Yahweh, too, had recognized these rights and would stand by his people in their assertion of them. Yahweh had heard the cries of the Hebrew slaves. It was this that had prompted him to call Moses and to send him into their midst to work for their deliverance. This belief in the rights of the individual continued with the Hebrews throughout the entire course of their history. It always served as a check on the activities of any ruler who would try to exercise undue arbitrary authority over his people.

The presence of this spirit contributed much toward the greatness of the Hebrew civilization though it constituted a real danger for them during the early period when they were gaining their first foothold in the land. It meant that any attempt to unite the tribes under the leadership of a military hero would be met with resistance on the part of those who feared that the leader might become too powerful and exercise a despotic control over the people. The tendency was strong for each tribe to consider its own interest without thought for the welfare of others. Yet, it was highly important for the Hebrews to stand together. They must either unite or be driven out of the land. This necessity for national unity was one of the factors which led to the demand for a king. The influence of the Canaanite organizations in this respect is indicated in the Old Testament narrative which tells us the Hebrews wanted a king so they would be like the other nations around them.[11]

Another element in the cultural transformation can be seen in the change from the nomadic or shepherd mode of living to an agricultural existence. Instead of living in tents and moving about from one part of the country to another, they began building permanent residences in the villages and cities of the land. Then, too, it was necessary for them to learn how to till the soil and care for the crops. Not knowing anything about the methods of agriculture, they had to learn from the Canaanites how to take care of their land. This process involved serious consequences for the Hebrew religion, for the farming methods of the Canaanites were directly associated with the worship of the baal deities credited with the power to secure good crops. Whatever instruction they might give to the newcomers concerning the tilling of the soil would include information pertaining to baal worship.[12] The Hebrew would, of course, be unable to distinguish between the merits of the two types of instruction. Although he would desire to remain faithful to the religion of Yahweh, he would also see the importance of doing whatever was necessary to obtain a good harvest. Since he had not been accustomed to think of Yahweh as a god of agriculture, it would seem quite appropriate for him to make offerings to the baal deities and thus obtain their favor at the same time he was making other offerings to Yahweh as an expression of his loyalty to the god of his own people. It is quite evident from the Old Testament records that many of the Hebrews became worshipers of both Yahweh and Baal. This procedure could not, however, prove to be satisfactory over a long period of time. Sooner or later each Hebrew would have to decide to which of these opposing deities he would give his loyalty. The outcome seems to have been a transformation in the conception of Yahweh, so that he no longer remained the shepherd god of a nomadic people. He began to acquire, at least in their minds, the characteristics of an agricultural deity. The change did not take place all at once and it was never accepted by some of the people. Certain of the prophets were strong in their denunciation of the newer conception of Yahweh and they continued to plead for a restoration of the older idea with its emphasis on the moral qualities that had been stressed during the wilderness period. Nevertheless, for many of the Hebrew people Yahweh became virtually another baal god, his chief distinction being that he was the baal for Israel.

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[11] See I Sam. 8:19-20.

[12] See Albert E. Bailey and Charles F. Kent, *History of the Hebrew Commonwealth* (New York: Chas. Scribner's Sons, 1920).

Evidence of this change in the conception of Yahweh can be seen in the fact that he became a "possessor of the land" and had the power to give it to anyone whom he might choose. His close connection with the land is indicated by a number of passages in the Old Testament. In Chapter 11 of Judges there is a story concerning Jephthah who speaks to Ammon about the land which the Ammonite god had given to his people just as Yahweh had given another land to the Israelites. Not only did the Hebrews believe that Yahweh possessed the land but they were equally sure that he dwelt in it. "The land in which you live, in the midst of which I dwell" is one of the statements attributed to Yahweh (Num. 35:34). And again, "The land shall not be sold in perpetuity, for the land is mine" (Lev. 25:23). The same idea is expressed in the story of Namaan, the Syrian king, who came to the prophet Elisha to be cured of leprosy. After his miraculous cure by washing in the river Jordan, he indicated his appreciation for what had been done by offering a sacrifice to Yahweh. Then in order that he might sacrifice again after he had gone back home, he took with him, so we are told, "two mules burden of earth" from the Palestinian soil (II Kings 5:17).

As time went on many of the local baal shrines were used by the Hebrews for the worship of Yahweh. Later tradition, of course, ascribed a different reason for the sanctity of these particular places. They were said to be sacred because they had been visited by the early patriarchs. The sanctity of the shrine at Bethel was due to Jacob's having passed that way while en route to the home of his uncle. The veneration of Hebron was explained by the fact that Abraham had entertained heavenly visitors at the same place.[13] Some of the sacred trees and wells, used at one time in the Canaanite worship of local spirits, were likewise appropriated by the Hebrews and their sanctity was explained by reference to the patriarchs. For instance, the trees were sacred because they had been planted by Abraham. And again, Jacob had dug some of the wells and used them for the watering of his flocks.

Not only was Yahweh worshiped in many of the same places where baal shrines had previously been located but in time he came to be worshiped in much the same manner as the baal gods were worshiped by their followers. Evidence of this may be seen in the character of the new festivals which the Hebrews began to observe. In addition to the early feast of the Passover which dates back as far as the early nomadic period and which was celebrated in the spring of the year at the time of the weaning of the animals, there were now celebrated new feasts of a distinctly agricultural character. There was the feast of unleavened bread in which an offering of first fruits was made to Yahweh. Other feasts were celebrated at the time of the grain harvest and at the grape gathering in the fall of the year. These feasts were similar in character to the ones that had previously been observed by the Canaanites.

Many of the characteristics of the Canaanite baal gods were now attributed by the Hebrews to Yahweh. For example, one of the most important functions of the baal deities was that of presiding over the forces of fertility and this function was now taken over by Yahweh. His power was extended so that it included the forces of reproduction in men and animals as well as the growth factors of vegetation. He had power to "open the womb" and thus he could enable the wife of Abraham to have a son in her old age (Gen. 29:31). Rebekah, the wife of Isaac, was likewise enabled to conceive after her husband had entreated Yahweh, and the same was true of the mother of Samuel (I Sam. 1). Yahweh also had the power of "closing the womb" and he could render a couple childless if he so desired.

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[13] See Julius A. Bewer, *The Literature of the Old Testament* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1924), p. 71.

The Character of Yahweh

It was in the ethical aspects of their religion that the Hebrews made their greatest contribution to civilization. According to the biblical traditions these aspects were an essential part of the worship of Yahweh and some of them can be traced to the very beginning of this worship among them. Even in the age of Moses which takes us back to one of the earliest periods of Hebrew history, we can find the germs of a moral development destined to make the worship of Yahweh unique among the religions of the ancient world. It was to this conception of Yahweh which prevailed during the early nomadic period that the great prophets of a later generation appealed in their efforts to persuade the Israelites to abandon the worship of the baal deities, and to cease trying to worship Yahweh after the manner of the ritual which they had observed among the Canaanites.

While it is true that we cannot attribute to Moses more than a very small part of the laws which are now included in the Pentateuch we are safe in crediting to him the spirit of the legislation which is contained in the Book of the Covenant. We may also say that he was responsible for the idea of a covenant relationship between Yahweh and the people of Israel. This code of laws and this interpretation of Yahweh were both dominant among the Hebrew people during the period of their migrations and early settlement in the land of Canaan. They led to the ethical standards which were recognized by the people and which were indeed praiseworthy for that period of their development. These standards included such elements as: loyalty to the members of one's family or tribe; the readiness of an individual to sacrifice himself for the group to which he belonged; a relatively high code of sex morality; courage in war; generosity; hospitality; and an elemental sense of justice on the part of individuals in dealing with members of their own group. For the most part these virtues were made necessary by the rugged character of the Hebrews' experiences in the desert. At any rate they stand in sharp contrast with the manner of living which characterized the wealthy class in a settled and prosperous agricultural society.

These ethical elements associated with the early religion of Yahweh do not warrant the conclusion that the Hebrew conception of deity was lofty in every respect. Actually, the Yahweh of this period was limited in many different ways. He is described in the early Judean narrative as an anthropomorphic god who possesses some of the same characteristics as human beings. He has a physical body and he talks with individuals face to face. He is a jealous god and he will not tolerate the worship of any rivals. He is also a war god and one whose interests are narrow enough to include only the welfare of his own people.

The warlike character of Yahweh is revealed in many of the early writings of the Old Testament. In the "Song of Deborah," the excerpts that have been taken from the *Book of the Wars of Yahweh,* and in the narratives that are recorded in the Books of Samuel, war has a pre-eminent place. Yahweh's presence is frequently declared to have been manifest on the field of battle. He brought victories to the armies of Israel and because of his success in battle he was styled "Lord of hosts" and "mighty in battle" (Psalms 24). Nothing seemed to please him more than the destruction of Israel's enemies. He commanded his people to bring it about and he wanted them to know that "to obey is better than sacrifice."

Yahweh was a powerful god and his presence on the field of battle usually meant that the armies of Israel would be victorious. But he was not all-powerful. The gods of the Canaanites could offer him a real struggle and it was not impossible for them to get the better of him. Occasionally even Yahweh might find his match. At one time during the conquest of Canaan, we are told

> And the LORD was with Judah, and he took possession of the hill country, but he could not drive out the inhabitants of the plain, because they had chariots of iron. (Judg. 1:19)

The many stories of bloodshed and cruelty in which the Hebrews participated, either under the direct command of Yahweh or at least with his approval, have constituted a difficult problem for some students of the Old Testament. The explanation for these acts is to be found in the conception of deity which prevailed during the early period and at the times when the various accounts were written. While it is true that important ethical elements are included in the Hebrew worship of Yahweh from the beginning, the full implications of these elements were not realized until centuries later. Human understanding of the nature of deity has always been a process of growth and development. We have no right to expect anything other than this in the history of the Hebrew religion.

The Period of the United Kingdom

The establishment of the monarchy was an important event in the history of the Hebrew people. It gave to them a sense of national unity and strengthened their position with respect to the surrounding nations. Saul, the first king, was in some respects at least an able ruler. Under his leadership the boundaries of the kingdom were extended and the number of Canaanite strongholds in the land was reduced. He was not successful in his wars with the Philistines and his attitude toward potential rivals alienated many of his subjects. The next king, David, was a much greater individual and he was by far a more able administrator. His reign accomplished so much toward the building of a strong and prosperous nation that future generations looked back upon it as a kind of golden age. He must have possessed a charming personality. He was an able warrior and he had some sense of justice in his dealings with individuals. Solomon, who was David's son and the last king to reign over the united nation, possessed a great talent for organization. He expanded the system of government which his father had established and divided the country into administrative districts for the purpose of taxation. One of his greatest achievements was the building of a temple in the city of Jerusalem. He sponsored commercial and industrial enterprises and increased the wealth of the country a great deal.

In spite of the political and economic achievements of this period very little was accomplished along the lines of moral and religious development. The reign of David was the high point in the life of the monarchy. He is presented to us as a loyal and devout worshiper of Yahweh but the stories that have been preserved of his activities indicate a conception of deity that is in many respects crude and primitive. Take, for example, the account that is given of his experiences with the priests of Nob.[14] David had been a fugitive from the court of King Saul. He came to the priests of Nob and requested them to give him food and shelter. He knew that it would not be lawful for them to grant this request. He was equally sure they would not do it if the reasons for his being there were known to them. They could not do it without jeopardizing their own lives. Hence, David, in order to secure the entertainment which he desired, represented himself as coming from Saul's court on a friendly visit and under the auspices of the king. This was, of course, deliberate falsehood. However, the priests took him at his word and entertained him hospitably. Soon afterwards the news came to Saul that the priests of Nob had befriended David and in punishment for what they had done Saul caused seventy of the priests to be put to death. There is no record that David made any amends for this injury to the priests of Nob or even recognized the act as wrong. He did not hesitate to use deception most of the time he was a fugitive.

Another incident in David's life shows again the primitive character of his conception of Yahweh. Some time after he had been inaugurated as king of Israel, the land was visited by a famine. It proved to be a severe one and David, anxious to learn the cause of it, made enquiry of Yahweh. He was informed, so the record goes, that the famine had been sent to avenge the Gibeonites for a wrong which had been done them when Saul failed to live up to the terms of an agreement which he had made with them. Anxious for the famine to cease, David immediately went to the Gibeonites and asked them what he must do in order to make matters right with them. They replied that nothing would satisfy them except the blood of seven of Saul's descendants. This request, David assured them, would be granted. Accordingly, he took seven of Saul's grand-sons and turned them over to the Gibeonites to be hanged. The record tells us they were hanged in the springtime at the beginning of the rainy season. Their bodies were hung up on posts where they were exposed throughout the summer. It was not until the beginning of the rainy season of the next year that "God heeded supplications for the land." [15]

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[14] I Sam. 21.

We cannot, in fairness to David, judge him by the ideals and ethical standards of a later age than that in which he lived. He lived in a period which preceded any marked development of moral consciousness among the Hebrews and it is for this reason that we find primitive elements in his conception of Yahweh and the forms of worship which were appropriate. When we consider the conditions which prevailed during the era of his reign, it is indeed remarkable that we find as much evidence as we do to indicate moral standards which were recognized by him.

[15] II Sam. 21.

Chapter 4

THE BEGINNINGS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

Our brief survey of the arguments leading to the formation of the Documentary Hypothesis called attention to the fact that there are good reasons for believing the first six books of our Old Testament are composed of older narratives which were in existence for some time before being assembled into their present form. Modern scholarship has not only accepted this hypothesis with reference to the Hexateuch but the principles on which it was based have been extended to include many of the other books in the Old Testament. We are now fairly certain that many separate documents have been incorporated into the literature and it is possible, within certain limitations, to know what some of them were. This is due chiefly to the method that was employed by the Hebrew writers and editors. Had they followed the more modern procedure of condensing their source materials and restating it in their own words we would have no way of knowing what was contained in the earlier sources. Fortunately for us they either copied their entire sources or selected the particular excerpts which they wanted to use. This procedure makes it possible for us to identify them. Sometimes they indicated the name of the document from which the excerpts had been taken. In this way we are informed about the existence of such books as *The Book of the Wars of Yahweh, The Book of Yashar the Upright, The Royal Annals, The Temple Annals, The Book of the Acts of Solomon,* and several others. Although these books are no longer in existence we know something about them from the references which were made to them by later writers. It is by studying these excerpts and the context in which they appear that we gather most of our information concerning the oldest literature to be included in our present Old Testament.

While we do not have sufficient information to enable us to know exactly the content of all of these early sources or the precise order in which they appeared, we can locate some of the more important ones and we can be fairly sure about the period of Hebrew history represented by each one. Without attempting to give anything like a complete list of these earliest sources, we will classify our materials on the basis of the literary forms used for their expression. For our convenience we will refer to them as early poems, early laws, and early stories. The quality of these sources will be indicated by a few examples from each of these classes.

Early Poems

Among the earliest fragments of literature to be included in our Old Testament is a number of short poems or songs made in celebration of some particular event which occurred during the early centuries of Hebrew history. One of the oldest of these is Lamech's "Song of Revenge,"

> Lamech said to his wives:
> "Adah and Zillah, hear my voice;
> you wives of Lamech, hearken to what I say:
> I have slain a man for wounding me,
> a young man for striking me.
> If Cain is avenged sevenfold,
> truly Lamech seventy-sevenfold." (Gen. 4:23-24)

This song evidently belongs to the primitive period of Hebrew history. It is an expression of savage cruelty in the strong boast of their ability to crush and destroy the weak.[1] It is a valuable source for the modern historian since it enables him to reconstruct the life which was characteristic of this period and to contrast it with the ideals which were accepted at a later time.

The crossing of the Red Sea by the Israelites after their exodus from the land of Egypt was the occasion for Miriam's "Song of Victory" recorded in the Book of Exodus.

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[1] The song is not merely the boastful chant of an individual but it is the conventional chant of the blood avenger who wants to follow the pattern set by Lamech. See E. W. K. Mould, *Essentials of Bible History* (New York: The Ronald Press Co., 1950), pp. 111-12.

And Miriam sang to them:
"Sing to the Lord, for he has triumphed gloriously;
the horse and his rider he has thrown into the sea."
(Exod. 15:21)

The song belongs to the early folklore of the Hebrews. It was originally an expression of joyous emotion experienced by a group of people who had just been delivered from the peril of an Egyptian army. The prophetess Miriam, who was the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand and led the people in a joyful dance. The short couplet, which is an example of parallelism, describes the shout of triumph and the response of those who were celebrating their deliverance. The song became the basis for a longer poem which is known as the "Song of Moses." It is recorded in verses 2 to 20 of the same chapter.

The digging of a well which yielded a copious supply of water seems to have inspired the "Song of the Well" which we find in Num. 21:17-18:

Then Israel sang this song:
"Spring up, O well!—Sing to it!—
the well which the princes dug,
which the nobles of the people delved,
with the scepter and with their staves."[2]

The conflict between the Israelites and the Amorites constitutes the setting for another song which appears in Num. 21:27-30. The Israelites had asked permission to march through the Amorite territory. When this permission was refused them, they marched in anyway and completely destroyed the city of Heshbon. In a spirit of satire someone addressed the following lines to the Amorites:

Therefore the ballad singers say,
"Come to Heshbon, let it be built,
let the city of Sihon be established.
For fire went forth from Heshbon,
flame from the city of Sihon."
(Num. 21:27-28)

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[2] For a discussion of poems in the Pentateuch see R. H. Pfeiffer, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1941), chap. viii.

These short songs or poems which we have mentioned are typical of the early folklore of the Hebrew people. Like the many stories having to do with the lives and adventures of the early patriarchs they were preserved orally for generations, being repeated around the camp fires and at other family gatherings. It was somewhat different with the "Song of Deborah" for this is a longer poem and it is one of the first to be included in the literature of the Hebrews. The song is now recorded in Chapter 5 of the Book of Judges.

> "Hear, O kings; give ear, O princes;
> to the Lord I will sing,
> I will make melody to the Lord, the God of Israel."
> (Judg. 5:3)

It was written in commemoration of a great victory which the Israelites had achieved at the battle of Megiddo, where the forces of the Canaanites under the leadership of Sisera had been completely routed. The song was evidently written by a contemporary who witnessed the conflict. For this reason it is an invaluable source to the modern historian who wants to reconstruct the events of this early period. There is a prose account of the same event in Chapter 4. This account was probably based on the older poem which had been in existence for some time before the prose narrative was constructed. Since it comes from the period which preceded the permanent establishment of the Hebrews in the land of Canaan, it furnishes the best source of information we have concerning the moral and religious ideals that characterize this particular age.

The historical background of the poem is to be found in the story of the struggle which the Hebrews put forth to gain possession of the land of Canaan. When they first entered this land after their exodus from Egypt they settled in different parts of the country and took over the difficult task of adjusting their manner of living to an agricultural existence. Their relationship to the Canaanites who had been in the land for a long time prior to their coming seems to have been friendly. They hoped to learn from these Canaanite farmers something about the proper methods for tilling the soil and taking care of their crops.

There was no intention of coming into an open conflict with them. The Hebrew tribes were scattered over a wide territory and each one was concerned primarily with its own affairs.

In the meantime, the Canaanites were not too well pleased with the newcomers. They were afraid the Hebrews would eventually become powerful enough to take over the land and drive them from their own homes. This, they determined, they would not allow to happen. If they were to prevent such a disaster they would have to take action at once to drive out the invaders. Their strategy was to attack the Hebrews one tribe at a time. In this way each tribe would be conquered before aid could reach them. For some time the Israelites were apparently unaware of any hostile intentions on the part of the Canaanites. They were busy with their own problems and no attempt was made to organize themselves for any defensive action. As time went on the hostility of the Canaanites became more and more evident. The situation which preceded the open conflict is described in the following words of the poem:

"In the days of Shamgar, son of Anath,
in the days of Jael, caravans ceased
and travelers kept to the byways.
The peasantry ceased in Israel, they ceased
until you arose, Deborah,
arose as a mother in Israel."
(Judg. 5:6-7)

It was the prophetess Deborah[3] who first realized the desperate plight of the Hebrews and decided to do something about it. She saw the need for united action on the part of the scattered tribes. If they would all stand together they would be able to meet successfully any attack launched by the Canaanites. On the other hand, if the tribes not in danger themselves should refuse to come to the aid of those who were under attack, there was small likelihood that any of them would survive. The problem was how to persuade the tribes who were living in safety to set aside their own immediate interests and risk their lives by coming to the help of the ones who were in distress. It was at this point that Deborah arose to the occasion and became a true prophetess or spokesman for Yahweh. She sent out a call to all of the scattered tribes asking them to come to the aid of Yahweh against the mighty forces of the Canaanites. It is important to note that the call was sent in the name of religion, for loyalty to Yahweh was interpreted to mean the willingness of the people to identify their interests with the welfare of the tribes taken as a whole. Yahweh was the Hebrew god. His interests were bound up with them and no one could refuse to come to the aid of the tribes in danger without being disloyal to the god whom they worshiped.

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[3] Deborah is referred to as a prophetess because she was one who spoke for Yahweh.

The response of the people to Deborah's call is indicated by the following lines:

"My heart goes out to the commanders of Israel
  who offered themselves willingly among the people.
  Bless the LORD."
(Judg. 5:9)

They came from different tribes some of whom were located in the north far removed from the actual scene of danger. They understood what they were doing and made their sacrifices voluntarily. In memory of their brave actions the poet wrote:

"From Ephraim they set out thither into the valley,
  following you, Benjamin, with your kinsmen;
from Machir marched down the commanders,
  and from Zebulun those who bear the marshal's staff;
the princes of Issachar came with Deborah,
  and Issachar faithful to Barak;
  into the valley they rushed forth at his heels.
Among the clans of Reuben
  there were great searchings of heart."
(Judg. 5:14-15)

Not all of the people responded to Deborah's call and the poem contains a sharp rebuke for those who put their own comfort and security ahead of the common cause.

"Gilead stayed beyond the Jordan;
  and Dan, why did he abide with the ships?
Asher sat still at the coast of the sea,
  settling down by his landings.

Zebulun is a people that jeopardied their lives to the death;
Naphtali too, on the heights of the field."

. . .

"Curse Meroz, says the angel of the Lord,
curse bitterly its inhabitants,
because they came not to the help of the Lord,
to the help of the Lord against the mighty."
(Judg. 5:17-18, 23)

The battle was fought on the plains of Megiddo. The Canaanites were organized under the leadership of Sisera. Their forces were equipped with horses and chariots while the Israelites fought on foot with the weapons that could be carried easily. Fortunately for the Hebrews the weather turned in their favor. A heavy storm came up and deluged the plain so that it became a sea of mud. The horses and chariots could not operate to advantage under these conditions and the Israelites who were not thus encumbered rushed in and completely routed their enemies. In the confusion which followed the battle Sisera fled from the scene of action and sought refuge in the tent of Jael who was the wife of Heber the Kenite. The Kenites seem to have been on friendly terms with the Hebrews and Jael took advantage of her opportunity to help their cause. When Sisera asked her for a drink she presented him with a bowl of milk. As he bent his head to drink she killed him by driving a tent pin into his head. This brought to an inglorious end the leader of the Canaanites for it was considered disgraceful for a warrior to be slain at the hands of a woman.

As the poet interprets these events, she finds the power of Yahweh displayed in the storm which brought victory to her people. She writes:

"Lord, when thou didst go forth from Seir,
when thou didst march from the region of Edom,
the earth trembled,
and the heavens dropped,
yea, the clouds dropped water."
(Judg. 5:4)

Describing the storm still further, she writes:

"From heaven fought the stars,
from their courses they fought against Sisera."
(Judg. 5:20)

The literary skill of the author can be seen in the description which she gives of the death of Sisera and the scene which took place in the home of his mother as she waited anxiously for her son to return from battle with the spoils of war.[4] The outcome of the battle is regarded as triumphant for the cause of Yahweh and the poem closes with these words:

"So perish all thine enemies, O Lord!
But thy friends be like the sun as he rises in his might."
(Judg. 5:31)

David's lamentation over the death of Saul and Jonathan is expressed in another short poem which the author of II Samuel took from the Book of Yashar.[5]

"Thy glory, O Israel, is slain upon thy high places!
How are the mighty fallen!"

. . .

"How are the mighty fallen
in the midst of the battle!"
(II Sam. 1:19, 25)

The high esteem which David holds for the fallen heroes is indicated in the poem. We would judge from these lines that his sorrow was genuine although we need to bear in mind that David had been an outlaw from the court of Saul and at the time the poem was written he was anxious to gain the loyalty of the former king's subjects.

"How are the mighty fallen
in the midst of the battle!

"Jonathan lies slain upon thy high places.
I am distressed for you, my brother Jonathan;
very pleasant have you been to me;

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[4] There are two accounts of Sisera's death recorded in Chapters 4 and 5 respectively. According to the account in Chapter 4, Jael lured Sisera into her tent before killing him. Chapter 5 gives the more authentic account.

[5] II Sam. 1:17.

your love to me was wonderful,
passing the love of women."
(II Sam. 1:25-26)

The "Blessing of Jacob" is another early poem. It is recorded in Gen. 49:2-27. The content of the poem is attributed to Jacob, the father of the twelve tribes of Israel. Shortly before his death he is said to have called his sons about him and indicated to each one the future that was in store for his respective tribe. We know from later Hebrew history that this was a literary device frequently used to project the ideas of a particular age back to an earlier period. It would thus appear that the later events had been correctly anticipated by some ancient hero for whom the people have come to have a strong admiration. Particular emphasis is given in this poem to the brilliant future which will come to the tribe of Judah. From this we may infer that the poem itself belongs to the period when great hopes were being cherished for the future of the southern kingdom.

The "Oracles of Balaam" recorded in Num. 23:7-10, 18-24; and 24:3-9, were written in commemoration of certain events said to have taken place during the march of the Israelites toward the land of Canaan. Balaam had been commissioned by Balak, the king of Moab, to pronounce a curse upon Israel. Three times he opened his mouth for this purpose but each time he spoke a blessing instead of a curse. The story illustrates the seriousness with which the early Hebrews regarded the pronouncement of a curse. Its efficacy did not seem to be questioned in the least. Yahweh's concern for the welfare of his own people and the peculiar means which he used to bring it about is also reflected in the poems.

"Who can count the dust of Jacob,
or number the fourth part of Israel?
Let me die the death of the righteous,
and let my end be like his!"
(Num. 23:10)

"how fair are your tents, O Jacob,
your encampments, O Israel!"
(Num. 24:5)

Early Laws

According to Hebrew and Christian traditions, Moses was the author of all the laws which are included in the first five books of the Old Testament. If the tradition is interpreted to mean that the spirit of Israel's first great lawgiver is expressed throughout the whole body of legislation which came into existence, there can be no serious objection to it. If, on the other hand, it is thought to mean that each of the specific laws mentioned in these books was spoken directly by Moses, the tradition is not in accord with the facts which are revealed in the Old Testament itself. While we are told that some of the laws were given to the Israelites by Moses we are not to infer that he gave all of them. In fact, we are told explicitly that elders and judges were appointed to assist Moses and their decisions as well as his own were incorporated in the body of laws to which all the people were subject.[6] We know, too, of specific laws given for the first time long after the era of Moses. For example, there is the law concerning the division of booty captured in battle. According to the narrative in I Samuel, this law is credited to King David who is said to have changed the custom in respect to this matter and to have made the new arrangement "a statute and ordinance for Israel to this day."[7] Still, we find in the Book of Numbers that this law is credited to Moses![8] Obviously, there was a tendency among the later Hebrew writers to attribute to Moses laws which came into existence long after the period in which he lived.

Modern scholarship does not enable us to know with certainty just what laws were given by Moses. We can, however, be reasonably sure about the legislation which characterized the earlier periods of Hebrew history. There are certain law codes preserved in the literature which seem particularly appropriate to the age of Moses and the era which followed the entrance of the Hebrews into Canaan. The tradition associating the name of Moses with the giving of the Ten Commandments is a very

[6] Num. 11:16-17.
[7] I Sam. 30:21-25.
[8] Num. 31:25-27.

old one and it is not unreasonable to suppose that his work constituted the basis for the earliest Decalogues recorded in the Old Testament.[9] There is, of course, no way of knowing with absolute certainty the order in which the various Decalogues found in the Old Testament came into existence. Neither can we be sure about the exact content which was meant to be included in each one. We can, however, be reasonably sure that the set of Ten Commandments included in the early Judean history and in the parallel Ephraimite narrative were among the first codes of law to be recognized by the Hebrew people. C. F. Kent in his book *The Growth and Contents of the Old Testament* has reconstructed what he believes to be the oldest Decalogue belonging to each of these histories. According to his interpretation, the original Decalogue recorded in the Judean history is the one found in Exod. 34:14-26. The parallel version which belongs to the Ephraimite history is found in Exod. 20:23; 22:29; and 23:15-19. He believes it is quite possible that both versions are based on an older Decalogue which preceded the writing of each of these histories.[10] It is not improbable that this Decalogue was known as far back as the time of Moses. It may indeed have been formulated for the first time by him. At any rate some set of requirements of this type was recognized prior to the ninth century and it was this code of laws which formed the basis of the social and religious obligations binding upon the Hebrew people.

It is only natural that the content of the Decalogue should change in some respects with each new version to be recorded. What is of greater importance so far as the development of Hebrew religion is concerned is that certain ideas connected with it did not change. One of these was the firm conviction that the Commandments had been given by Yahweh and obedience to them was the foundation for individual and social morality. Closely associated with this idea was the conception of a covenant relationship by means of which Yahweh was united with the Hebrew people. The covenant idea is one of the most important concepts included in the Old Testament. It was one of the comparatively few ideas which gave distinctive character to the Hebrew religion. Although we do not know the exact date when it was first recognized, it belongs to a very early period of Hebrew history. There are many good reasons for attributing the idea to Moses, although some of the later traditions which have been preserved in the Old Testament project it back as far as the times of Abraham.

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[9] See E. W. K. Mould, *op. cit.*, pp. 102-4.

[10] See Charles F. Kent, *The Growth and Contents of the Old Testament* (New York: Chas. Scribner's Sons, 1926), pp. 172-85.

The basis of the covenant idea was the belief that Yahweh had entered into an agreement with the Hebrew people. It was this agreement which marked the beginning of his peculiar relationship to them. Prior to the establishment of the covenant, Yahweh had no special interest in the affairs of the Hebrews. He was not related to them through any natural ties of kinship as was usually the case in the religious life of primitive peoples. Instead, he came to them from without and entered into a voluntary agreement with them. This is of particular importance for the student of the Old Testament since it indicates that the Yahweh whom the early Hebrews worshiped was no mere projection of their national ideals.[11] He was not the product of an imagination developed for the purpose of satisfying their particular hopes and aspirations. He was, first of all, a deity who was entirely outside their group and for this reason he had no particular obligation to them. He chose them not because he was obliged to do so but solely because he wanted to do something for them. Just why he should have chosen Israel in preference to some other nation is never explained. It was always regarded as a mystery which could never be resolved by any thinking process. It was an expression of love and magnanimity on his part toward them and that was all they could say about it.

The content of the covenant was a set of laws or regulations which Yahweh gave to them and which the people agreed to obey. So long as these laws were obeyed, Yahweh would be their god and give to them whatever protection and security it was within his power to bestow. On the other hand whenever the Hebrew people failed to live up to their part of the agreement Yahweh was no longer bound to fulfil his part of it. The special relationship would be automatically dissolved and the people could no longer expect protection or favor from him. The importance of this understanding between Yahweh and the Hebrews is something that cannot be emphasized too much. It meant that from the very beginnings of their religious history Yahweh was recognized as a deity who was superior to the nation and who could therefore sit in judgment on their activities. The nation was not free to do anything which the people might wish. There was always a power beyond the wish and imagination of the people and to this power they were always subject regardless of the particular desires which they might have at any given time.

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[11] This is one of the most important points about the idea of a covenant relationship as it existed among the Hebrews. As a general rule among ancient cultures one finds that the conception of deity is little more than a projection of the national ideals of the people. The fact that this was not true of the Hebrews is one of the most distinctive characteristics of their religious development.

The Book of the Covenant

The importance of the covenant idea for the religion of the Old Testament is indicated by the way in which the term is associated with the various recognized laws, and with the ritual that was observed. We read, for example, about the book of the covenant, the oath of the covenant, the ark of the covenant, and the blood of the covenant. Indeed, we would not be far from the truth if we characterized the entire Old Testament as a book which sets forth the religion of the covenant. The idea of a covenant relationship includes the later developments of Hebrew religion as well as the earlier conceptions of it. This fact is illustrated in the work of the great prophet Jeremiah who lived during the seventh century and who referred to his interpretation of religion as the "new covenant" in order to contrast his position with the views of his predecessors whom he regarded as living under the "old covenant."[12]

It is interesting to note that the earliest code of laws recorded in the Old Testament was known as the *Book of the Covenant.* It is found in Exod. 20:23-23:19. The specific laws which are

[12] Jer. 31.

included in it have to do with the treatment of persons, regulations governing property, social requirements, and religious duties.[13] The code as a whole bears many resemblances to the ancient Babylonian *Code of Hammurabi*. The early contacts which the Hebrews had with various phases of Babylonian culture suggest that the older law code may have served in some respects as a pattern for the new one. In both instances the laws are declared to have been received directly from the deity, and in some cases the laws dealing with property and with the punishment which should be administered for criminal offenses are practically the same.

The laws pertaining to persons are representative of the early period of Hebrew culture. Slavery is part of the accepted system of the day. The slave is regarded as the property of the master who can, with few exceptions, do as he pleases with that belonging to him. Children who are born to slaves become the property of the master, and an injury to a slave who belongs to another person can be reckoned in terms of a specific amount of money. Hebrew slaves are given certain privileges which are not granted to foreigners and some consideration is given to the welfare of female slaves. For instance, if a man sells his own daughter into slavery, she shall not be compelled to work in the fields as the male slaves are required to do.

The status of women, as this early code of laws records it, is little better than that of slaves in general. A man's wife is reckoned as a part of his personal property. The deflowering of a virgin may be atoned for by the payment of a sum of money. Wives, like slaves, may be purchased with money. A husband may divorce his wife whenever she is displeasing to him. One of the main differences in the status of a man's wife and his female slave lies in the fact that he may not sell the former as he is permitted to do with the latter. The slave may share his couch the same as his wife.

The famous law of revenge holds in the case of any injury which one person intentionally inflicts upon another. "Then you shall give life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, wound for wound, stripe for stripe."[14] Justice is conceived in terms of equality and it is believed that the punishment should be made equal to the crime. This conception of justice seems primitive in comparison with later ideals but we should not forget that it denotes considerable progress from the early song of revenge which was attributed to Lamech. According to the *Book of the Covenant* a murderer must forfeit his own life to compensate for his crime. Animals are to be punished for the injuries which they inflict, and the pronouncement of a curse upon one's father or mother is punishable by death. This penalty is provided because it is assumed that the curse is an efficient instrument for carrying out the pronouncement of the one who utters it.

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[13] See Julius A. Bewer, *The Literature of the Old Testament* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1924), chap. iii.

In the laws pertaining to property an attempt is made to deal with various problems in such a way that the injured person shall receive an amount which is approximately equal to the loss he has sustained. The provisions of the code have to do with the problems which arise from such factors as accidents resulting in the injury of another person's animals, damage to fields and vineyards, theft of animals, the use of property that is held in trust, borrowed property, and animals which are kept for their owner. It is in this section of the code that provision is made for the payment of a sum of money as compensation for the seduction of a virgin.

The social conditions presupposed in this body of laws are those which prevailed among the Hebrews prior to the establishment of the monarchy. For instance, there is no mention made of a king nor is there any reference to a judicial system for determining one's guilt or innocence. The administration of the laws seems to have been left to the local elders in any given community. Judges were not appointed for the specific purpose of settling disputes. In some instances the injured party takes it upon himself to administer the law. He collects the fine or inflicts the punishment upon the guilty party. In other instances the case is brought before the elders of the people and their decision is accepted as final. In extreme cases the individual may be required to give an oath in support of his testimony. Both the oath and the curse were regarded as effective means for use in the administration of justice.

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[14] Exod. 21:23-24.

The section of the code dealing with social regulations was designed to protect the poor and the defenseless against unfair treatment at the hand of their accusers. Witnesses are forbidden to accept bribes and they are enjoined to be truthful in the giving of testimony even though it may be contrary to their immediate interests to do so. Those who are in debt are to be treated kindly. Hebrew debtors are not to be charged interest for the use of a loan. Whenever they give their own clothing for security in the making of a loan, the clothing must be returned before the going down of the sun.

The religious laws forbid the making of images or the worship of any strange gods. Sacrifices are to be offered to Yahweh. They must be placed on altars which are built of unhewn stones. The first-born son in each family must be given to Yahweh and the same is true for the first-born of the cattle and sheep. No sacrifice can be offered to any god except Yahweh. In fact the Hebrews are forbidden to even mention the name of any other god. The Sabbath must be observed by resting from work on that day. This law was made to include hired servants, slaves and even the animals. The stranger or sojourner in the land must have the opportunity to rest on the Sabbath the same as the Hebrew. It is evident from a reading of the religious laws included in this code that the major emphasis is not placed on moral obligations. Yahweh requires sacrifices and strict obedience with reference to the various ritualistic requirements. But this does not mean that morality is omitted in the code of laws which are included in the *Book of the Covenant*. On the contrary, it was the element of morality in the religion of the Hebrews which more than any other single factor distinguished them from the other nations of that time. This was especially true of those ideals which date from the early nomadic period which preceded the agricultural life in Canaan. The virtues of the desert, which included a relatively high standard of sex morality, a strong sense of loyalty to the group, and the willingness of an individual to sacrifice his own interest in the welfare of the tribe, stand in rather sharp contrast with the customary attitudes of the baal worshipers in Canaan.[15]

Early Narratives

Stories concerning Israel's heroes and the experiences of the Hebrew people prior to their settlement in Canaan were told long before any of them appeared in written form. They formed a part of the tradition which had been handed down by word of mouth for many generations. We do not know how early the Hebrews began the writing of these stories but the evidence would indicate that sometime during the reign of King David a historical narrative was produced which we may speak of as the *Story of the Founding of the Kingdom.* It appears to have been written by a contemporary who had witnessed many of the things which he recorded. It is quite possible that the author was Abiathar, a priest who was closely associated with David's court.

The story begins with an account of the conflict between the Israelites and the Philistines. The latter had invaded Canaan shortly after the Hebrews had begun their settlement. They were not satisfied with the territory which they occupied at first but were determined to drive out the Hebrew settlers and take over their land. They attacked the Israelites in the mountains and, after a time, they succeeded in capturing the ark, an object on which the Israelites had relied to give them victory over their enemies. The capture of the ark by the Philistines was a real blow to the Hebrews. It meant not only a loss of power on the battlefield but a general weakening of their morale.

The possession of the ark by the Philistines did not prove the advantage to them that they had hoped. They stored it in a house along with their own god whom they called Dagan. The supremacy of Yahweh over this Philistine god was indicated by the fact that Dagan would be found lying on the floor whenever the two of them had been left together. This would, of course, strike terror into the hearts of the Philistines. In addition to this humiliation they suffered from a plague which worked havoc among them. In view of these experiences they decided to send the ark back to the Israelites. Along with it they sent as a votive offering a number of golden tumors as well as some golden mice. In this way they hoped through the use of sympathetic magic to rid themselves of the evil which the capture of the ark had brought upon them.

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[15] See E. W. K. Mould, *op. cit.,* pp. 183-84.

The selection of Saul as the first king of Israel is described in an interesting folk tale which begins with the story of a search for some lost animals and ends with an account of the finding of a king. Saul and one of his father's hired servants had gone out to look for some lost asses. The search had been unsuccessful and the two men were about to return home when one of them suggested that it might be well for them to stop at the home of a nearby seer whose name was Samuel. It was just possible that the seer might be able to help them so they would not have to go back to Saul's father without the animals for which they had been searching. The two men find the seer. He tells them not to worry about the lost asses as they have been found, but there is another matter of far greater importance to which they must give their attention. Samuel is sure that Saul is the man whom Yahweh would have to be king over Israel. Accordingly, he conducts an anointing ceremony in which oil is poured on Saul's head and he is proclaimed as the king of Israel.

Although the folk tale contained a popular account of Saul's selection as king, the actual history of the event was probably quite different. There is another story in the Book of Samuel which relates the intense displeasure of the prophet when the people ask for a king.[16] In still another place we are given the impression that the people were unwilling to accept Saul as their king until after he had distinguished himself in battle.[17] These various accounts seem to indicate that there were two schools of thought concerning the wisdom of Israel having a king. The author of the story of the founding of the kingdom was evidently one who believed the establishment of the monarchy was a good thing. Accordingly he used the story which would portray his point of view.

[16] I Sam. 7:15; 8:22.

[17] I Sam. 11, 12.

In Saul's battles against the Philistines he was aided by his son Jonathan who became a great favorite of the Israelite people. At one time Saul would have killed Jonathan in order to carry out a vow which he had made concerning anyone who would taste of food before the going down of the sun. Jonathan, knowing nothing about this vow, came across some honey which the other soldiers had refused to taste. Being hungry, Jonathan put his rod in the honey and then ate some of it. When Saul learned what had happened he was ready to carry out his vow even though it meant the death of his own son. However, the people who had come to love Jonathan would not allow Saul to do it. Even though he was their king they would not permit him to harm one who stood so high in their esteem.

David is introduced in this narrative in connection with the story of the slaying of the great giant who had challenged any one of the Hebrews to fight with him. David accepted the challenge and went out to meet this Philistine foe. His equipment consisted of a sling and a small bag of smooth round pebbles. With this simple device he slew the giant and cut off his head with the sword which had belonged to him.[18] On their return from their victories over the Philistines, the people sang praises to Saul and David. In some instances the greater praise was bestowed upon David and this aroused Saul's jealousy. In spite of the fact that David had married one of Saul's daughters the king's jealousy became worse and worse. In one of his spells he deliberately tried to kill David by hurling a spear at him.

As a result of Saul's attitude toward him David was forced to flee for his life. For several years he lived the life of a fugitive. During this time he became a vassal of King Achish of Gath who was prominent among the Philistines. This meant that David was giving his loyalty to an enemy of the Hebrew people. On one occasion he was ordered to go out and fight against the Israelites. He was, however, spared from doing this because some of the Philistines feared he might not fight against his own people. As a result he led an expedition against the Amalekites who had invaded Ziglag during his absence and carried away two of David's wives. His forces succeeded in completely routing the Amalekites. When they returned, he established a famous law concerning the distribution of the booty taken in battle. It was to be divided between the soldiers who did the actual fighting and the persons who stayed home and guarded the stuff which belonged to them. At this time David also sent a portion of the booty which he had taken to some of the princes living in Judea. These presents were for the purpose of winning their favor, thus preparing the way for their inclusion as loyal subjects in the new kingdom he wished to establish.

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[18] According to the record found in II Sam. 21:19 it was Elhanan the Bethlehemite who slew Goliath. The account which gives David credit for this act is probably an illustration of the tendency to idealize heroes after their greatness has been recognized and in so doing credit them with deeds which were actually performed by someone else.

Meanwhile the war against the Philistines had brought a crushing defeat to the Israelites. Saul and Jonathan, unable to reconcile themselves to this turn of events, fell upon their own swords. David wrote a poem of lamentation concerning the death of these two men. He praised them for their bravery and the many services which they had rendered. He professed a very deep sorrow in the loss of his trusted friend Jonathan and counted it a great tragedy that Israel's king had come to this untimely end.

Following these events David is said to have gone to Hebron where he was proclaimed king over the Judeans. He wanted of course to include in his kingdom the territory over which Saul had reigned. Although he had a large and popular following, his leadership was not accepted by all the people who had been subjects of King Saul. An attempt was made to install one of Saul's sons as his successor. Ishbaal was made king and he moved his capital to Mahanaim, in Gilead on the east side of the Jordan. For seven years there was war between the two kingdoms led respectively by David and Ishbaal. Abner was the chief military leader of Ishbaal's forces and Joab performed a similar service for David. After a time Abner revolted to David but was slain by Joab. Once more David expressed personal sorrow in a poem of lamentation concerning the death of Abner.

In order to establish himself as king over all of the Hebrew people David set up his headquarters in a new location. For this purpose he captured Jerusalem, a stronghold of the Jebusites which was located midway between the people of the north and those of the south. He renamed the place after himself, calling it the city of David, and made it the capital of the new kingdom. He used good strategy in the selection of this place which was destined to play such an important role in the life of the Hebrew nation.

The remainder of the story is a record of the court at Jerusalem with its many problems and perplexities some of which are described in intimate detail. There is the story of David's adultery with Bathsheba and the shameful way in which he brought about the death of her husband. There is also the story of Amnon's rape of his stepsister, Tamar. The failure of David to punish Amnon for this crime is one of the reasons that led to Absalom's rebellion. The stories indicate that while the author was an admirer of David he was not blind to his faults. He was evidently trying to present a true and unbiased account. The story closes with a record of David's last official actions and an account of Solomon's struggle for possession of the throne.

The Book of the Acts of Solomon

Just as the story of the founding of the kingdom was written by an admirer of King David, so a later narrative was produced by an admirer of King Solomon. We know about the existence of this document through a reference which is found in Chapter 11 of I Kings. The author of the history, recorded in the two Books of Kings, had evidently made use of it in his reconstruction of the era which preceded the division of the monarchy into a northern and a southern kingdom. We do not know all that was contained in the original book written by the disciple of Solomon, for later historians employed only the excerpts which were useful to their purposes and sometimes they added to these whatever explanations they thought necessary. Since the original book has been lost we can only infer from the excerpts which we have in the Book of Kings what its contents were. The author probably obtained much of his information from his own contacts with the achievements of Solomon's reign. What he had observed directly would be supplemented by popular tales about Solomon that were in circulation.

From the materials that are available to us, we would infer that Solomon's reign was splendid in many respects. It was while he was king that the temple was built in Jerusalem. In addition to this building there were magnificent palaces used for the maintenance of the king and his large and impressive harem. All of these building operations were an indication of the remarkable wealth and prosperity for which Solomon was responsible. He had developed commercial relations with Phoenicia and Egypt and he had made use of the great caravan routes to further the interests of his own people. He had reorganized the administration of public affairs and he built fortifications designed to strengthen his kingdom against any possible foreign attacks.

In addition to these administrative accomplishments Solomon was also distinguished by his remarkable "wisdom." This is displayed at the very beginning of his reign when Solomon has a dream at Gibeon in which he is asked what it is that he desires more than anything else. In his reply he prays, "Give thy servant therefore an understanding mind to govern thy people, that I may discern between good and evil; for who is able to govern this thy great people?"[19] Soon after this experience he reveals his wisdom in deciding the case between two women each of whom claimed to be the mother of a certain child. Solomon proposes that he cut the child in two and give half of it to each one. When one of the women objects and says she would rather see the other woman have the child than to have this happen, Solomon knows she is the real mother and he gives the child to her.

Further evidence of Solomon's greatness is seen in the visit of the queen of Sheba. As she is shown the wealth and splendor of Solomon's court she exclaims "the half has not been told." Not all of the events which are related are favorable to the king. The author records the cession of certain Galilean cities to the king of Tyre and he also tells about the rebellions which took place including the one led by Jeroboam.

[19] I Kings 3:9.

The Rise and Fall of the House of Omri

Another early narrative which was used as source material for the Book of Kings has to do with the dynasty of Omri, one of the great kings of northern Israel. Only a portion of the narrative has been preserved but this material is one of our most valuable sources for information about King Ahab and the series of wars carried on between the Israelites and the Syrians. Since we find no references to Omri in this material we may infer that the portion of the original narrative which dealt with the events of his reign were omitted by the author of the Book of Kings.

Omri's reign occurred during the period when Syrian power was at its height. Their leader, Benhadad I, had succeeded in capturing a number of Hebrew cities and he had forced Omri to grant to the Syrians certain rights in the capital city of Samaria. Later on, one of the Hebrew prophets predicted a renewal of the war and a routing of the forces of Benhadad II by King Ahab. The conflict took place as he predicted and the Israelites achieved a great victory. In establishing peace terms with the defeated Syrians, Ahab demanded only the return of the cities which had been captured during the reign of his father and a surrender of the special privileges which had been granted the Syrians in the city of Samaria. The Israelite people thought these terms were too lenient and they would not support Ahab in his attempt to execute them. The king decided to use force but before doing so he thought it would be wise to inquire of the prophets and learn from them whether Yahweh would approve the action he was about to take.

It is here that the story of Micaiah, the prophet, is related. All of the other prophets had told Ahab to "Go up . . . ; for the Lord will give it into the hand of the king." When Micaiah was asked about it, he told a very different story. He reported that Yahweh had shown him the terrible defeat which the Israelites would suffer as a result of the battle. He explained the report of the other prophets by saying "the Lord has put a lying spirit in the mouth of all your prophets." The king and the prophets who were supporting his plan were outraged at the statements made by Micaiah. Zedekiah struck him on the cheek and Ahab sent him back to prison. In the battle which followed, King Ahab was slain and all the predictions of Micaiah came to pass.

After the death of King Ahab the war with Syria is continued by his son Jehoram. Benhadad besieged the city of Samaria until a famine threatened to starve all the people who were inside the walls. Elisha, the prophet, had counseled the Israelites not to surrender and for this reason some of the people blamed him for the disaster and an attempt was made to have him killed. At a critical moment he predicted that the very next day would bring an end to the famine. On the morrow four famishing lepers who went to the camp of the Syrians to beg some food, found that the camp was deserted and all the Syrians had fled without even stopping to take their provisions along with them. When this news was brought to the people inside the city, they rushed through the gates and into the Syrian camp. In so doing they trampled to death one of the king's aides whom Elisha had predicted would die in that manner.

In another story Hazael of Damascus has inquired of the prophet Elisha concerning the illness of Benhadad. The prophet reported that Yahweh had told him Hazael would become king. On the next day Hazael murdered Benhadad and became king in his place. It was not long after this took place that Elisha sent one of his disciples to anoint Jehu who became the chief instrument in bringing about the complete overthrow of the dynasty of Omri. The destruction which fell upon this house was interpreted to be a punishment sent upon the kings who were disobedient to Yahweh. It was also a vindication of the predictions made by the prophets in connection with the messages which they had proclaimed in the name of Yahweh.

Chapter 5

THE EARLY JUDEAN HISTORY

Approximately one-third of the material found in the Old Testament consists of historical writings. The earliest of these was produced as far back as the ninth century B.C. Other histories were written during each of the successive periods of time that elapsed while the Hebrews were still a nation in Palestine. This abundance of historical writing would seem to indicate that the Old Testament authors were deeply interested in matters of history. While this may have been true in some respects there are others in which it is not true. Certainly these writers were not historians in the modern sense. They had little interest in history as such, and they cared nothing about the mere production of an accurate record of events which had taken place. Their interest was primarily a setting forth of the way in which Yahweh had had to do with the affairs of men and nations. The meaning of history, as they understood it, was something that could never be explained or even grasped apart from a consciousness of the reality of Yahweh and an understanding of the purpose which he had in mind for the peoples of the world. In brief, we may say of these writers that their main purpose was a religious interpretation of history especially as it had to do with the activities and the destiny of the Hebrew people.[1]

There is another respect in which the Old Testament writers differed from our contemporary historians. Their major objective was a practical rather than an intellectual one. In other words, they wanted to produce action. Information was for them only a means to an end. The people must decide the course they will follow and the purpose of history was to enable them to make the right decision. Knowledge and action are so closely related that we can scarcely consider one of them apart from the other. Historians are always trying to reveal truth and they always hope that an understanding of the ideas which they set forth will make a difference in the lives of people. But they differ with respect to what is given the major emphasis. The historians of the Old Testament did not leave one in doubt concerning the meaning which they saw in the processes of history. For them it was Yahweh who determined the course of events.[2] His purpose was the ultimate objective which could never be completely defeated. But the realization of this goal could not be achieved without the cooperation of human beings. Consequently, the fulfilment of the divine purpose would always be delayed when people were disobedient to Yahweh's commands.

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[1] See in this connection G. Ernest Wright, *The Challenge of Israel's Faith* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1944), chap. ii.

Because their writing was dominated by this interpretation of history, they did not undertake the writing of any complete account of all that had happened.[3] Instead, they selected those events which would illustrate most effectively the particular theme which they happened to have in mind. Other events which had no bearing on their theses would of course be omitted from their writings. For this reason the worth of the histories which they produced cannot be judged accurately if we take into account only the matter of historical accuracy with reference to the events which they recorded. Their writings possessed a moral and religious value which, at least from one point of view, was far more significant than any accurate or full account of what had actually transpired. In order to understand these writings we need to bear in mind that it was this moral and religious purpose to which their task as historians was always made subordinate.

The oldest comprehensive history in the Old Testament is what is known as the *Early Judean History*. Other names used to designate the same document include the *Judean Prophetic History*, the *Yahwist*, the *J Narrative*, and in many instances simply the letter *J*. The history has not been preserved for us in its original form. It has been copied many times and with these copyings many changes and additions of new material have been made. It has been interwoven with the Ephraimite history [4] and the reaction of editorial writers can be detected in many instances. However, on the basis of literary style, proper names used, and the particular conceptions of deity which occur, it is possible to reconstruct the history with a fair degree of accuracy. Several attempts have been made to do this. An instance of this kind may be found in Kent's *The Student's Old Testament*.[5] Another one is contained in Brightman's book *The Sources of the Hexateuch*.[6] A rather full account of more recent scholarship in this field is presented in R. H. Pfeiffer's *Introduction to the Old Testament*. While it is true that Old Testament scholars are never in complete agreement concerning all of the materials which belong to this history, the area of their agreement is large enough to enable us to be reasonably sure with reference to the major portion of its contents.

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[2] See Paul S. Minear's article, "Historical Consciousness," *The Journal of Bible and Religion*, May, 1940.

[3] See Paul S. Minear's article, "The Conception of History," *The Journal of Bible and Religion*, August, 1943.

According to the view most generally accepted, the *J* history begins with the story of creation as it is found in Chapter 2 of Genesis.[7] It ends with an account of the settlement of the Hebrews in the land of Canaan. The materials which belonged to the original narrative are now scattered through the books of Genesis, Exodus, Numbers and Joshua. Although the materials have been combined with other documents and have been revised from time to time it is still possible to identify most of the material which originally belonged to it. The unity which is characteristic of the story as a whole furnishes a good argument in support of the view that it was produced by a single writer. There are, however, some materials which are usually assigned to this history that would seem to indicate more authors than one.

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[4] See J. A. Bewer, *The Literature of the Old Testament* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1924), pp. 85-86.

[5] Charles Foster Kent, *The Student's Old Testament* (New York: Chas. Scribner's Sons, 1905). The first volume of this work is entitled *The Beginnings of Hebrew History*. Following the introductory chapter the author places in parallel columns the materials which he identifies with each of the original narratives.

[6] Professor Brightman's book reproduces in separate chapters the materials which he assigns to *J*, *E*, and *P* respectively. See E. S. Brightman, *The Sources of the Hexateuch* (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1918).

[7] Professor R. H. Pfeiffer believes the *J* history begins with the story of Abraham in Gen. 12. See his *Introduction to the Old Testament* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1941), pp. 142-43.

On this point the experts in the field are not in complete agreement and we may therefore conclude that the early Judean history was written either by a prophet or a group of prophets who worked in close cooperation with one another. There can be little question concerning the approximate date when it was written. Practically all scholars who accept the documentary hypothesis are agreed that it was written in the southern kingdom about 850 B.C.

Purpose of the History

Like other historians whose writings are included in the Old Testament the author of the Judean history wrote with a very definite purpose in mind. He believed the establishment of the Hebrew people in Canaan was to be the culmination of a plan which had been present in the divine mind from the very beginning of the world. For this reason he puts the history of his own people in the larger setting of world history and accordingly he begins his story with an account of the creation of the earth.

If the divine purpose had been present since the creation of the earth the question would naturally arise as to the long delay of its realization. Why have the Hebrews encountered so much difficulty in their attempts to gain full possession of the land? Why did they suffer so many hardships and why is the fulfilment of their hopes and ambitions still something to be achieved in the future? To all of these questions the author had a very definite answer. It was the fault of the people themselves that the divine purpose had not been realized. They had not been obedient to the commands which the deity had given to them. Sin, which he regarded as merely another name for disobedience to the divine commands, had entered the world and this was the cause of all the suffering and misery which human beings have had to endure. It was the explanation for all the national calamities which had befallen the Hebrews and it was the reason why their establishment in Canaan had not become a reality. The divine purpose could not be fulfilled until men had learned to obey God in everything they were told to do. This was the chief lesson which the author of the Judean history would make clear to his contemporaries. It was for this purpose that he selected the particular stories which are included in his narrative. He wanted to furnish abundant illustration for the idea which he regarded as more important for their welfare than anything else.

Closely associated with this interpretation of the divine purpose was the author's deep conviction that it will eventually be realized. Events may occur which will delay its fulfilment, but the purpose itself cannot be defeated permanently. He relates a long series of obstacles that have arisen, each of which temporarily thwarted the divine purpose but in every instance the difficulty was overcome. The first setback occurred in the Garden of Eden when Adam and Eve ate of the forbidden fruit. The slaying of Abel, the wickedness that caused Yahweh to send a flood, the tower of Babel, the barrenness of Sarah the wife of Abraham, the oppression of the Hebrews in Egypt, the facing of the Red Sea with the Egyptian army behind them, and many other situations which developed, all served to hinder the realization of the divine purpose. In the past all of these hindrances have been overcome. Only a few more remain. The author hopes that the experiences of the past will inspire faith that any remaining difficulties will likewise be overcome.[8]

Source Materials

The materials used in the writing of this history were drawn from oral traditions as well as from written documents in existence at that time. Some of the oral traditions consisted of stories which had been taken over from other peoples and adapted to the purposes and needs of the Hebrews. We have no way of knowing just how many written sources were used in the writing of this history but we do have references in the Old Testament to such documents as the *Book of the Wars of Yahweh,* the *Book of Yashar,* the *Book of the Acts of Solomon,* the *Royal Annals* and the *Temple Annals.* Some of these must have been in existence when the Judean history was written and it is not unlikely that the author made use of them.

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[8] At the time when this history was written the monarchy had been established for some time. The Hebrews were settled permanently in the land of Canaan but the full realization of Yahweh's purpose had not yet been achieved. The author hopes the remaining difficulties will soon be overcome.

The oral traditions include those stories which provide an explanation for those questions which naturally arise when one begins to wonder about the beginnings of human life and the world in which men live. How did the world come into existence? Who were the first parents of the human race? How did they happen to be in the world? Why do women experience pain in childbearing? What is the reason for suffering which is so common in human life? What is the relationship of man to the lower animals? Was woman created the equal of man? Why does the serpent crawl in the dust? Why does the rainbow appear in the sky? Why do human beings have to toil in order to gain a living for themselves? These questions and many others of a similar nature arise whenever human beings try to understand the world which they experience. Primitive man has no knowledge of scientific methods or procedure. Hence, any answers which he may give to these questions will be in terms of some story or myth which his mind can grasp. The Hebrews were not the first people to entertain such questions. Neither were the answers which they gave to them entirely original in every instance. The Babylonians, Egyptians, Canaanites and others had thought about these problems and worked out some kind of answer to each one long before the Hebrews produced any literature of their own.[9]

When the Hebrews became established in their own land and began the development of their own culture it was only natural that they should be influenced by the mythologies of the older peoples with whom they had been associated. This does not mean that they accepted in every detail the stories which provided answers to their questions. It means rather that the stories which they first learned from their neighbors provided a starting point for the Hebrews. From these stories they would at least derive some suggestions for the explanation most satisfactory for them. Students of anthropology are well aware of the striking similarity between stories in the early literature of the

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[9] See in this connection E. W. K. Mould, *Essentials of Bible History* (New York: The Ronald Press Co., 1950), chaps. vii-viii.

Old Testament and the explanations which are fairly common among other primitive people. One of the best treatments of this subject is to be found in James G. Fraser's well-known classic *Folklore in the Old Testament*. In this book he compares the Hebrew creation stories with similar ones which he has found in the mythologies of other people. The idea of the first man being formed from the dust of the earth is fairly common in the mythologies of primitive people. The Babylonians had a tradition according to which the blood of the god known as Bel was mixed with earth and from this bloody paste the first man was formed. The Egyptians thought that the father of the gods moulded men out of clay in a manner similar to the way in which a potter forms particular objects on his wheel. Among the Greeks there was a legend to the effect that Prometheus moulded the first men out of clay. Similar stories have been found to exist among the primitive tribes of Africa, Australia, and the South Sea Islands. The impartation of life to these objects made from clay is usually accomplished by bringing them into direct contact with the breath of the one who first fashioned their bodies.

The creation of the first woman by taking a rib from the body of the man is another part of the creation story which has been found in many different localities. It helps to explain the relationship between the two sexes which is generally characteristic of primitive societies. The fact that the author of the Judean history gives us a story of creation which has so much in common with the legends of other people leads us to believe that some of these stories, current among the Babylonians and the Canaanites, served as a starting point for the Hebrew conception of the origin of man.

The story of the great flood is another instance in which the Hebrew account is parallel to the legends found in many parts of the world. Among the ancient civilizations it is the Babylonian deluge story which seems to approximate most closely the story of the flood which appears in Genesis.[10] The Babylonian story of the flood is contained in one of the tablets identified with the great Gilgamesh epic. The tablet is believed to have been in existence as early as 2100 B.C. It may be even older than that. According to this account, the Babylonian gods proclaimed the coming of a great flood and gave instructions for the building of a ship which could be used for the preservation of life upon the earth. The man who did the building was given explicit information about the size of the ship, the materials to be used in its construction, and the number of rooms which it should contain. After building the ship, the man placed all of his possessions on board. He then took into it living creatures of all kinds and the door was closed. A terrific storm ensued which completely destroyed the race of men except for those on board the ship. For six days and nights the rain continued. Finally the boat came to rest on the top of a mountain.

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[10] A translation of those portions of the Gilgamesh epic which parallel the Hebrew account of the flood may be seen in the appendix of C. F. Kent, *The Beginnings of Hebrew History* (New York: Chas. Scribner's Sons, 1905).

Before emerging from the ship, an attempt was made to find out whether the waters had subsided enough to warrant a permanent leaving of the boat. On the seventh day a dove was released. It flew away for some distance but then returned since there was no place for it to rest. After this a swallow was released. It, too, returned to the ship. Then a raven was turned loose and it did not come back. This meant that a landing place had been found and that it was now safe to leave the ship. As soon as the people were out on dry ground, a sacrifice was offered to the gods who inhaled the sweet odor of the ascending smoke. The story closes with a promise from the gods that never again will mankind be destroyed by a flood.

The many points of similarity between the Babylonian story of a flood and the Hebrew account, which appeared centuries later, are too numerous to be explained as mere coincidence. There can be little doubt that the Hebrews first learned about a flood from the traditions which had survived among their neighbors. It then became possible for them to use this story as the basis for another that would be in harmony with their conception of Yahweh and his purpose in human history. The fact that stories of a great deluge have been found in the early legends of so many different peoples living in various parts of the world was at one time regarded as evidence of a great flood covering all parts of the earth. This conception is now regarded as untenable by most geologists who find it inconsistent with the many facts which they have observed. Their explanation of these stories is that they are based on actual local inundations which have occurred in their local parts of the world. It is not impossible that the Hebrew story was based in part on a similar event that earlier Hebrews had witnessed, but it is also highly probable that their account was influenced to a considerable extent by the Babylonian legend.

Many of the stories which were included in the Judean history have a background similar to the creation and flood narratives. This is true of the stories concerning the tree of knowledge, the fall of man, the tower of Babel, the mark placed on Cain, the making of a covenant, and many others found in the early literature of the Old Testament. This fact does not minimize in the least the original contribution of the Hebrew writers. It simply explains the sources or materials with which they had to work. The distinctive thing about the Hebrew version of these stories is to be found in the use made of them. Stories that originally had nothing to do with religious ideals or moral purposes were taken over by the Hebrew writers and made vehicles for conveying to their contemporaries the best that they knew of Yahweh and his dealings with human beings.

Contents of the Judean History

The history begins with the story of the creation of the first man out of the dust of the earth. It was Yahweh who formed him out of this material and then breathed into his nostrils the breath of life.[11] No other creatures were living on the earth at this time, but immediately after the creation of man, Yahweh planted a garden in Eden and placed man in the midst of this garden with the instruction that he was to care for it and make use of the fruit of every tree with the single exception of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Because Yahweh saw that it was not good for man to be alone, he formed the beasts of the field and the birds of the heavens and these were brought before the man to be named. Not finding any of these creatures suitable for a "help meet" for the man, Yahweh caused a deep sleep to come upon Adam during which a rib was taken from his side, and out of it was created the first woman who was called Eve. This, we are told, explains the close relationship of husband and wife since originally they belonged together.[12]

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[11] Gen. 2:2-7.

Life in this first garden of Eden was a paradise, an ideal state. It did not last very long for the tempter appeared in the form of a serpent and persuaded the parents of the human race to eat of the forbidden fruit. This is one of the most important stories that the author records, for it tells us what he regards as the cause of all the sin and suffering that has entered the world. It was caused by disobedience to the divine command. Unlike the early Greek philosophers who regarded ignorance as the source of evil in the world, the writer of the *J* narrative makes it clear that sin is essentially an act of will rather than a matter of faulty intelligence. Adam and Eve knew what they were doing but they disobeyed in spite of this knowledge and it was this disobedience which constituted their sin. Because of their sin they were expelled from the garden. A curse was placed upon the serpent and this is the reason given to explain the fact that it must crawl about on its belly instead of walking on legs as other creatures do. Because of Eve's disobedience, women must henceforth experience pain in giving birth to children. As a consequence of Adam's sin it was decreed that all of his male descendants must work for their living thus earning their daily bread by the "sweat of their brow." [13]

The story of the fall of man is but one of a long series of events, each of which meant a temporary defeat of the divine purpose. It is important to note the defeats were only temporary, for Yahweh's plan in relation to human destiny was something that could never be permanently overthrown. As soon as any one of the delaying events would be finished Yahweh would start again toward the realization of his ultimate objective. Thus we find that following their expulsion from the garden of Eden two sons were born to Adam and Eve. Through them it would be possible to produce a race of people who would conform to the divine will. Almost immediately the plan was again interrupted. Cain and Abel were asked to bring sacrifices as an offering to Yahweh. Abel brought a lamb from his flocks but Cain presented some of the produce which he had obtained from the land. Yahweh was pleased with the sacrifice of Abel but he rejected the offering made by Cain. This is an interesting story which reflects an early conflict between two conceptions of the deity. There were those who believed Yahweh was a shepherd god whose interests were concerned primarily with the problems of people who followed this occupation. They were opposed by others who were accustomed to identify Yahweh with an agricultural type of life. Evidently the story concerning Cain and Abel was originally told by someone who was sympathetic with the shepherd conception and who did not look with favor on the opposing interpretation of deity.[14]

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[12] Gen. 2:18-25.

[13] Gen. 3:17-19.

According to the story, Cain was angry because his offering had been rejected and in the spirit of revenge he slew his brother Abel. Thus the divine purpose was again hindered through the evil actions of a human being. It was from the line of Cain that we read of Lamech whose terrible song of revenge represents one of the most cruel and primitive methods of dealing with one's enemies.

After the death of Abel another son was born to Adam and Eve. His name was Seth. Once more Yahweh's purpose has a new chance for fulfilment. It was with Enosh, the son of Seth, that men first began to call on the name of Yahweh.

The one reference which we find in the early literature of the Old Testament to beings who were descended from both human and divine parents occurs in the *J* narrative. We are told that it came to pass that "the sons of God saw that the daughters of men were fair; and they took to wife such of them as they chose." Yahweh did not view this union with favor.[15] He saw that wickedness had spread over the earth to the extent that he even repented having made man in the first place. Because of this wickedness he decided to destroy the entire race of men and all other living creatures he had made. This would have meant a complete defeat of the divine purpose but it was averted when Yahweh found one righteous man whose name was Noah. Yahweh instructed him to build an ark and take on board the ship not only the members of his own household but enough of the animals and other living creatures to preserve each one of the species that had been created. Then follows the story of the flood. After the waters had subsided and the ark was abandoned on Mount Ararat, Yahweh started over again with Noah and his family. In the story of Noah's curse on Canaan we have an illustration of the way in which later events are seen as the fulfilment of early predictions. *J* would have it appear that Noah's curse was an indication that some day the land of Canaan would be subject to the Hebrew people.

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[14] The conflict between the shepherd and agricultural conceptions of the deity is reflected in the writings of the eighth-century prophets. They were pleading for a return to the older conception which was free from many of the immoralities that were associated with the worship of the Canaanite baalim.

[15] See Gen. 6:1-6.

Again the spread of wickedness over the earth brought about another setback to the realization of the divine purpose. This time it culminated in the attempt on the part of men to build a tower that would reach unto heaven. In this way they could escape if another flood should come upon the earth. The story of the tower of Babel is one of the most profound of all the legends included in this history.[16] It represents the many attempts which through the centuries human beings have made in their efforts to save themselves from disaster when they have transgressed the divine commands. These attempts have always ended in failure and the author hopes the lesson this story contains will be apparent to everyone who learns about it. In the original story Yahweh was very much disturbed about the tower being built on the plains of Shinar. He went down to investigate and when he saw what was going on he confounded the languages being used so the builders could no longer understand one another. In addition to the religious lesson of the story, it provided an explanation for the variety of languages spoken by different peoples.

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[16] An excellent presentation of the more profound elements included in this story may be found in Reinhold Niebuhr, *Beyond Tragedy* (New York: Chas. Scribner's Sons, 1937), chap. ii.

After this experience with the tower of Babel a new attempt was made to carry out the original purpose for which man had been created. This time it was Abraham who was called to be the founder of the race that would become known as Yahweh's chosen people. The story of this call is now recorded in the first part of Chapter 12 of Genesis. It is one of the more important items included in the entire history for along with the call to Abraham Yahweh made a threefold promise to him. He said, "I will make of you a great nation"; "and by you all the families of the earth will bless themselves"; and "To your descendants I will give this land." The history then shows how these promises have been fulfilled. The first one was realized in the marvelous way in which the nation grew from Abraham's seed. The second one was fulfilled when Joseph was able to save, not only his own people, but the Egyptians and many others from starvation. The third one was kept when the Israelites had conquered Canaan. The narrative is thus seen to have the qualities of both epic and drama. It relates the experiences of the patriarchs but it shows how, also, through the intervention of Yahweh, many events worked together toward the realization of a single goal.

The career of Abram (his name was later changed to Abraham) was not without its difficulties. He and his wife Sarai (later known as Sarah) had traveled to Egypt. When the Pharaoh, who was attracted by her remarkable beauty, attempted to secure her for his harem, Abram deliberately lied in order that she might be spared this fate. On the return to Canaan a dispute arose between the herdsmen who were caring for Abram's flocks and the ones who were performing a similar task for his nephew Lot. Abram nearly lost the better portion of his land as a result of his generosity toward Lot. He allowed his nephew to take his choice of the land and he agreed to take for himself whatever was left. Lot chose the plains of the Jordan and made his home in the city of Sodom. Abram dwelt by the oaks of Mamre. While living here he was visited by three strangers who turned out to be heavenly visitors. It was during this visit that a divine promise was made to Abram and Sarai concerning the birth of a son. Because they had reached an advanced age without having any children, it did not seem possible for them to become the parents of a great race of people. At first it was assumed that Abram's heir would be born of an handmaid, and in accordance with this idea Ishmael was born to Sarai's maid who was known as Hagar. It was now made clear to Abram and his wife that, in spite of their age, a son would be born to them.

In the meantime, the two cities of the plain, Sodom and Gomorrah, were destroyed by fire. The fire was a punishment sent upon these cities because of their wickedness. Only Lot and his two daughters escaped. The birth of Isaac is recorded and there follows a story concerning the selection of Rebekah for his wife. Abram's servant is sent into the land of Mesopotamia to find a suitable bride for Isaac since it is not proper for him to marry a daughter of the Canaanites. At this point in the narrative another obstacle appears to prevent the realization of the divine purpose. Rebekah is barren. However, Yahweh again intervenes and makes it possible for her to bear children. She produces a pair of twins who are known as Esau and Jacob. That their descendants would be at enmity with each other was signified by their strife at the very time of their birth.

Since Esau was born before Jacob the birthright belonged to him and, according to the custom of that time, the father was supposed to bestow a special blessing on his first-born son. Isaac was old and his eyesight had failed him when he called Esau to his side and explained that he was about to bestow upon him this important blessing. He asked his son to go out and slay an animal in order that his favorite meal might be prepared. Following the meal the ceremony would take place. Now Jacob was the mother's favorite son. Together they developed a scheme for fooling the father and having the birthright given to Jacob. The plot was successful, the blind father blessing Jacob at the time when he thought he was doing it for Esau. When the older brother returned from his task and learned about the deception that had taken place, he was angry and determined to kill Jacob.

It was in order to escape from the wrath of his brother Esau that Jacob left Beer-sheba and started toward Haran the home of his uncle Laban. While he was en route Yahweh appears to him and renews the promise which had been made to Abraham and to Isaac. Jacob names the place Bethel and continues his journey. After arriving at Haran he marries two of his uncle's daughters, Leah and Rachel. He also enters into an agreement with Laban concerning the wages he is to receive for his work. Jacob tricks his uncle into giving him more than he deserves and in a few years he has acquired not only a large family of sons and daughters but a vast amount of wealth. He decides secretly to leave his uncle's home, taking his family and all his possessions back to the country from whence he first came. On the way home, he learns that his brother Esau is coming against him with a force of four hundred men. He crosses the river Jabbok and wrestles with a man of God. The man blesses Jacob, changes his name to Israel, and restores a hip which has been put out of joint. When he meets his brother Esau the two men are reconciled.

The story of Joseph which is told at great length furnishes many illustrations of the way in which a divine providence overrules in the affairs of men. The coat of many colors, the envy of Joseph's brothers, their plot against him, the selling of Joseph as a slave to the Ishmaelites, his experience in Potiphar's house, his unjust imprisonment, his release and appointment as governor over all the land of Egypt, are all included in a dramatic account of Yahweh's plan for preserving his people through a long period of drouth. Joseph had received information in a dream concerning the lean years that were to come. Under his direction grain had been stored, enough to provide for all the people during the coming famine. The dry years had reduced the food supply in Canaan and the time came when Jacob sent his sons to Egypt to buy the necessary food to maintain their existence.

When the sons of Jacob arrive in Egypt, Joseph is the one to whom they must go in order to secure food. Joseph recognizes his brothers but they do not know him. Then follows a fascinating story concerning the younger brother who had been left at home with the father, the demand on the part of Joseph that they bring him with them when they come again, Jacob's reluctance to allow Benjamin to go with his brothers, the second visit to buy food, the silver cup placed in Benjamin's sack, Joseph making himself known to his brothers, the return of all the brothers with their families and their father to Egypt, and their settlement in Goshen. It is a thrilling story of the triumph of Yahweh's purpose over a long series of obstacles.[17]

After the death of Jacob and Joseph their descendants did not fare so well. The Egyptian Pharaoh, alarmed over the way in which the Hebrews were increasing in number and power, decided that something must be done to curb their growing strength. He, therefore, appointed taskmasters over them compelling them to work in the construction of great storehouses located at Pithom and at Raamses. In spite of their oppression the Hebrews multiplied and became very strong. One of their number, a man named Moses, resented the treatment which his people were receiving at the hands of the Egyptians. One day as he saw an Egyptian taskmaster beating one of his fellow Hebrews, Moses struck the Egyptian and killed him, then buried his body in the sand. Soon the news of what Moses had done spread around and when the Pharaoh heard about it Moses was forced to flee from Egypt in order to save his own life. He went to the land of Midian where he married Zipporah, one of the daughters of a Midianite priest.

Moses remained in the land of Midian until the king of Egypt died. It was then that Yahweh appeared to him in the midst of a burning bush and commissioned him to give his services to the liberation of the Hebrews who were in bondage to the Egyptians. Moses did not feel equal to the task. He insisted that the people would not listen to him. He had no prestige among them and, besides, he was slow of speech. Yahweh then enabled him to perform a series of miracles and assured him that the one who had created his mouth would also enable him to use it. With this assurance, Moses took his wife and his sons and returned to Egypt.

When Moses, speaking for the Hebrew people, requested that they be allowed to go on a three days' journey into the wilderness and offer sacrifices to their god, he was met with a stern rebuff on the part of Pharaoh. The Egyptian ruler declared the Hebrews had been treated too kindly and he ordered the taskmasters to increase their burdens by making them secure their own straw for the burning of the bricks which they were making and they must do this without diminishing the number of bricks they had made when straw was furnished them.

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[17] The Joseph story may be found in Gen. 37, 39-50.

Moses complains to Yahweh that he has not dealt fairly with his people since Pharaoh is now oppressing them worse than ever. Yahweh replies that he will take Pharaoh in hand and see to it that the Hebrews are allowed to go. A series of plagues are sent upon the Egyptians. In the first plague the waters of the river Nile are turned into blood. Then comes a plague of frogs and another one of flies. The fourth plague is a grievous murrain which afflicts and kills the Egyptian cattle, though none of the animals belonging to the children of Israel are harmed. Still Pharaoh was stubborn and would not let Israel go. Then came a plague of hail and another one of locusts. Finally Pharaoh tells Moses to take his people and go worship their god, only they must leave their flocks and possessions in Egypt. Moses replies that they must have their animals with them in order to offer sacrifices. At this Pharaoh becomes angry and tells Moses never to let him see his face again under penalty of death. Then comes a final plague when the first-born of men and beasts were slain among all the Egyptians but the Israelites were spared. Then Pharaoh gives permission for the Hebrews to go. In fact the Egyptians were more than anxious for them to leave.

According to *J*'s account it was a vast company that set out from Egypt. He tells us it was about six hundred thousand men besides the children and vast herds which they took with them.[18] It was apparently a great triumph for Yahweh. His purpose would now soon be realized. But no sooner had the Hebrews left Egypt than another obstacle confronted them. They were facing the Red Sea and the Egyptian army was pursuing them from the rear. The whole cause was in danger of being lost. But once more Yahweh comes to the rescue. A strong east wind caused the waters to recede and the Hebrews were able to march across on dry ground. When the Egyptians followed them in hot pursuit the waters came back together again drowning their entire army.

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[18] Exod. 12:37.

The deliverance of the Hebrews at the Red Sea made a profound impression upon the people. In commemoration of their remarkable triumph the "Song of Miriam" [19] was an expression of the joy that was felt. Although the song as recorded is very brief it marked a most important event in the experiences of the Israelites. It became the basis for the much longer "Song of Moses" [20] and throughout the subsequent periods of Hebrew history it was always referred to as the outstanding example of Yahweh's love for his people. It furnished the inspiration enabling the Israelites to pass through many a difficult crisis.

Following the story of this deliverance we have reported a series of incidents which occurred during the march through the wilderness. At Marah the water was bitter and Moses by casting a tree into the source of supply made the waters sweet. When the people were without food, bread came down from heaven so that everyone had enough to eat. Yahweh appeared to Moses and seventy of the elders of Israel but when Moses asked to see the glory of Yahweh, he was not permitted to see him directly. Yahweh placed Moses in a cleft of rock, covering him momentarily with his hand, so that when Yahweh's glory passed by Moses could not see Yahweh's face.[21]

At Sinai Moses took two tablets of stone and ascended the mount. When he reached the top Yahweh appeared in a cloud and was with Moses for forty days and nights during which time Moses neither ate nor drank. It was at this time that Yahweh made the covenant with Moses and instructed him to write the Ten Commandments on the tablets of stone. The Decalogue which *J* records is probably the oldest one of which we have any record in the Old Testament.

After coming down from the mount, Moses invites his brother-in-law Hobab to join the company. At first Hobab declines the invitation but when Moses tells him that he is needed as a guide during their perilous journey, he accepts. At one time the people complain bitterly because they have no flesh to eat. They are tired of the manna on which they have been living for so long a time. Moses intercedes with Yahweh who reluctantly sends them great flocks of quails but, at the same time, shows his displeasure by making them all sick from eating the meat they so desired.

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[19] Exod. 15:20-21.
[20] Exod. 15:1-18.
[21] Exod. 33:22-23.

When the company reached the wilderness of Paran, spies were sent out to see what kind of country was before them and to determine whether they would be able to go in and possess the land. The spies brought back an evil report saying that the land was flowing with milk and honey but because of the walled cities and great giants who lived there, they would be unable to possess it. Their wives and little ones would become a prey for the inhabitants of the land. They really believed it would have been better for them to return to Egypt. Because of this report, Yahweh was exceedingly angry with his people. He decreed that no one of the adults who were living at that time should be allowed to enter the promised land. Only the babes and little ones among them should have that privilege.

The story of Balaam forms an interesting introduction to the parables which he is said to have spoken. Balak, the king of Moab, had tried to get Balaam to pronounce a curse on the people of Israel. Because of Balaam's attitude, it was necessary for the ass on which he was riding to speak out against him. When Balaam did consent to speak for Balak his words did not have the desired effect, for instead of pronouncing a curse on the Israelites he gave them a blessing.

The Judean history closes with a brief account of Joshua and a record of the conquest of Canaan that did not take place all at once but included a whole series of conflicts, many of which ended in only a partial victory for the Israelites. The conquest of Canaan was the climax of the whole narrative. Yahweh's purpose had not been defeated in spite of all the obstacles that had arisen. It was true that it had not, as yet, been fully realized by the Israelites, but the remaining obstacles were small in comparison with the ones which had already been overcome.

Values of the Early Judean History

In evaluating this history, there are certain facts which one should have in mind. One needs to remember the early period when it was written, the source materials used in its composition, the reliability of the stories included, the skill of the author in organizing his materials, the way in which he transformed popular legends and myths, and, finally, the moral and religious teaching which it embodies. It would be a mistake to judge the history on the basis of any one of these points taken by itself. It is necessary for all of them to be taken into account.

So far as we know, this was the first comprehensive Hebrew history to be written. The date of its composition was long before comparable historical writings appeared among the Greeks. The author used as his sources both written and oral traditions. He wove his materials together into a single coherent story which set forth his conception of Yahweh and his relation to the Hebrew people. He believed the Hebrews had been destined from the very beginning to be the great and leading nation of the world. The realization of this purpose had been delayed many times through the activities of human beings. Nevertheless, its triumph at some time in the future was something he never doubted.

The historical value of this document varies with the different parts which it contains. For the pre-patriarchal period, *J* had only legends and ancient mythology. No firsthand account could be given of the creation, the flood, or other events belonging to this period. The author made use of the Babylonian legends but he transformed them in a manner which made them suitable for his purpose. The fact that these stories cannot be considered as historical in the modern sense of that term, does not detract in the least from their worth as instruments for the moral and religious lessons he wished to teach.

The stories of the patriarchs are probably based to a very large degree on actual reminiscences which were passed on orally from one generation to another. This would mean that the recorded stories, like the ones found in modern historical novels, had some basis in actual occurrences but would not, on that account, be accurate with reference to all of the reported details. These stories dealing with the traditional ancestors of the Hebrew people are marked by great sobriety of statement, contain few extravagant claims and lend support to the view they were based on events which actually took place. It is quite probable that various traditions concerning Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph had existed separately and that *J* was responsible for the particular way in which they are now organized and related to one another.

When the author writes about Moses and the events which followed the exodus from Egypt, we may be sure that the historical value of his materials has increased over that of the earlier stories. He is getting closer to the period in which he lived and naturally his sources for this part of the history are more reliable. His account of the events that had to do with the early conquest of Canaan is especially valuable.

Although the stories contained in this history are told with great literary skill, it is in the moral and religious ideals which they set forth that we find the greatest value of the *J* narrative. The author's conception of goodness is a purely formalistic one. It is built around the idea of obedience. Yahweh requires obedience to the commands he has given. It is not for human beings to decide what is best for them to do. They are not to find reasons to support the instruction given by Yahweh. Their duty is to obey and not to worry about the consequences which may follow. The disasters which come upon the people both individually and collectively are to be regarded as punishments which Yahweh has sent upon them because of their disobedience. If they want more prosperous times in the future they must learn that obedience to Yahweh is the only way to bring it about.

With this lesson in mind, *J* is able to take myths and legends from the Babylonians and the Canaanites and make them serve his purpose. Thus we find the creation story used to set forth the idea that Yahweh wanted to produce an ideal society upon earth. The fall occurred when man disobeyed, and this has been the cause of the misery and suffering that has come into the world. The flood came as a punishment for the wickedness which had spread over the earth. The story of the tower of Babel is an illustration of what happens when men try to protect themselves against the punishment following their transgression. We find throughout the history, traces of those customs and ideas which originally belonged to the Canaanites but are now interpreted in a way which gives to them new meaning and significance. It is quite obvious that *J* wished to purge the Hebrew religion of any contamination with the idols or spirits which had belonged to the older inhabitants of that land. He did not succeed in doing this completely but his transformation of stories and legends went a long way in that direction.

Although the author has a conception of deity which from the point of view of moral development is superior to the gods of the other nations, it still retains many of the ideas which are usually associated with the earlier expressions of anthropomorphism and there is an absence of the moral traits which the prophets of a later period always associated with him.

Chapter 6

THE EARLY EPHRAIMITE HISTORY

The century during which the early Judean history was produced was a turbulent one for the people who belonged to the northern kingdom. The division of the monarchy into two kingdoms created many problems for each of the new units of government. These problems were particularly difficult for the people of Israel who lived in the north. When they had decided to reject the leadership of Rehoboam and chose another person to be their king, they were cut off from the political and religious ties to which they formerly were attached. It became necessary for them to establish new headquarters for their government and to set up new places for their centers of worship and the performance of those ceremonies and rites which were associated with their religion.

In addition to these problems there was the matter of establishing their relationship to neighboring countries, especially the ones that were looking with envious eyes on the territory which the Israelites possessed. Assyria was becoming a powerful threat to the peace and security of the new country. Syria was another power which gave them no small amount of trouble, and there were times when Israel was at war with Judah.[1] As a result of their wars considerable territory was lost to their enemies and for a period of time they were able to maintain their national existence only by paying an enormous tribute to Assyria. To these problems involving their relationships to foreign countries there was added a number of domestic difficulties. The development of their natural resources in a manner which would provide for the needs of their own people was another task which demanded a great deal of their time and energy. Altogether, the first century of their existence as a separate nation was a difficult and troublesome era. The times were not favorable for any great literary development.

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[1] For a brief account of the history of this period see Albert E. Bailey and Charles F. Kent, *History of the Hebrew Commonwealth* (New York: Chas. Scribner's Sons, 1920), pp. 139-81, or E. W. K. Mould, *Essentials of Bible History* (New York: The Ronald Press Co., 1950), pp. 217-27.

It was not until the eighth century that the people of Israel—the name usually employed to designate the northern kingdom—enjoyed a period of comparative peace and tranquillity favorable to the writing of history as well as the production of other literary works. It was during this period that a prophet [2] or group of prophets undertook the writing of a history that would include the most important experiences of the Hebrew people and that would also show how these experiences were related to the divine purpose which, it was believed, must ultimately triumph in the world.

Purpose and Scope

The purpose and scope of this history were in many respects parallel to that of the early Judean history, although there is no evidence to indicate that its production was in any way dependent on access to the earlier document.[3] The author had his own purpose in mind and he used the materials available to him in a manner that would enable him to carry it out. It is customary to designate the author of this history by the letter *E* although we are unable to determine with certainty whether the narrative was produced by a single author or by a group of persons who were working together. There are some facts that have been used to support each of these alternative views. For our purpose we shall speak of the author as *E*. The appropriateness of this letter can be seen in the fact that it is the first letter of the word *Ephraim* which was the name of the leading tribe of the northern kingdom. The same letter occurs first in the word

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[2] R. H. Pfeiffer believes the author may have been a priest. At any rate the contrast between priest and prophet is not as great as it was formerly supposed to be.

[3] Although the *E* narrative was written independently of *J* it seems quite probable that *E* knew of the existence of *J* and was aware of its contents.

Elohim, the term used in the early part of the narrative to designate the deity.[4]

Like most of the historians of the Old Testament, *E* was interested in something more than a factual account of events which had taken place. He had certain definite convictions about the destiny of his own people and the way in which this destiny was related to the god whom they worshiped. He believed that obedience to the divine commands was the most important virtue which his people could possess. Without it there could be little hope for prosperity or any other national success. Above all else their religion must not be contaminated with idol worship. The god of the Israelites was a jealous deity and he would not tolerate the worship of other gods. To discourage the worship of idols was one of the main purposes for which he wrote. The author wanted all these ideas to be clearly understood by the people of Israel. For this reason he selected from the materials at hand those stories which would be particularly useful in the accomplishment of this purpose.

As in the case of the Judean history the author's source materials included many oral traditions as well as a group of poems and stories which had been committed to writing prior to that time.[5] Some of these materials had probably been taken over from the Canaanites or Babylonians with whom the earlier Hebrews had come into contact. In these instances the stories were usually changed or modified so that they would no longer be objectionable from the Hebrew point of view. Many of the accounts in the Ephraimite history are only parallel versions of the same stories recorded in the Judean history.[6] Others, such as the story of the sacrifice of Isaac, are peculiar to the *E* history.

The Ephraimite narrative begins with the story of the promise made to Abram as it is recorded in Chapter 15 of Genesis.

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[4] The deity is referred to as *Elohim* in all patriarchal stories prior to the time of Moses. After this point in the narrative, Elohim is used sometimes and at other times Elohim-Yahweh is used.

[5] For an account of the sources used by *E* see R. H. Pfeiffer, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1941), pp. 171-72.

[6] Since the two histories known as *J* and *E* respectively have been combined into a single document known as *JE* it is not always possible to determine the exact material which originally belonged to each of the separate narratives.

It covers the high points in the history of the Hebrew people from that time to the establishment of the monarchy in the land of Canaan. Some scholars believe the original history ended with the account of Joshua's farewell address to the people of Israel. Others believe that it was continued beyond this point and made to include the story of Saul's disobedience and the terrible disaster which came to him and his people as a result of it.

Although the original Ephraimite history has been worked over many times by later editors who have combined its contents with that of the Judean history, and who have made other changes and additions as they saw fit, it is still possible to trace the history with a fair degree of accuracy through the Books of Genesis, Exodus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, and Joshua. It is quite possible that some of the material which we find in the Book of Judges may have belonged to it as well.[7]

The fact that the author begins his history with the story of Abram rather than an account of the creation of the world indicates that he had no intention of projecting the story of his own people back as far as the beginning of the world. In this respect he was not so ambitious as the author of the *J* history had been. *E* was content to write about that portion of the human race to which his own people belonged. It is interesting to note that he does not assume the ancestors of the people of Israel had always worshiped the god whom they recognized at the time when he was writing. Abram is presented as the progenitor of the Hebrew people. At the time when the promise was made to him, he had been living in the land of Ur of the Chaldees. His people had not known the god whom the Israelites of a later period recognized as the only one to whom they should give their allegiance. Actually, the ancestors of the Hebrew people had been idolators. It was with Abram that the worship of the true god began. At the time of the exodus from Egypt he was introduced to the Hebrews again by Moses and from this time on the name of Yahweh had been associated with him.

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[7] The Book of Judges in its present form is to a very large extent the work of redactors and for this reason it is practically impossible to determine the content of the original material which was used.

The character of the deity as presented in this history shows some contrast with the conceptions found in the Judean history. With one or two exceptions, there is an absence of anthropomorphism which pictures the deity as having a physical body and talking directly with human beings. Instead, he is presented as a spiritual being whose dwelling is in heaven and who communicates with people through dreams and visions. This does not in itself indicate an advance in the conception of deity. It may have been due to the author's desire to present Moses as the only person who had spoken with him directly. With reference to the ethical ideals which are expressed, there does seem to be some advance over the *J* history since the deity is not conceived as giving his approval to acts of trickery and deception as was true in some of the stories recorded in the earlier narrative.

Contents of the History

The first part of *E*'s history has to do with the experiences of Abram whose name was later changed to Abraham. There are three stories about Abram in this narrative. The first of these has to do with Abimelech, the king of Gerar, who wished to have Sarah, the wife of Abram, for his harem. In the Judean history there was a story about Abram and Sarah in Egypt. When the Egyptian Pharaoh had desired Sarah for his harem, Abram deliberately lied by saying that Sarah was his sister.[8] In the Ephraimite history Abram tells only a half-lie when he says Sarah is his sister for she is a half-sister, being the daughter of Abram's father but not of his mother. This difference in the two stories indicates that *E* is more sensitive about the obligation to speak truthfully. The explanation which he gives presents Abram in a more favorable light. He has not done anything wrong. He is even declared to be a prophet who is capable of bringing great blessing to Abimelech and his household.

The second story is concerned with Hagar and Ishmael. In the Judean history a quarrel breaks out between Abram's wife, Sarah, and Hagar the bondwoman who is the mother of Ishmael.

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[8] If *E* was familiar with *J*'s history, he deliberately omitted the story of Abraham and Sarah in Egypt.

Sarah is jealous of the other woman and insists that she be sent away. In *E*'s version of the story, God tells Abram to listen to the demands of Sarah and carry them out. It thus appears that the harsh treatment accorded Hagar is not Abram's fault at all. He is kind and sympathetic toward the bondwoman and her son. He gives them a bottle of water and a loaf of bread for their journey, and when the water is gone, God speaks to Hagar and comforts her. It is quite possible that *E*'s veneration for Abram was no greater than that of *J*, but the important point is that the ethical standards by which he is measured seem to be on a higher plane than those recognized in the earlier history.

That *E* regarded obedience to God's commands as the most important of all virtues is shown in the third story which reports the sacrifice of Isaac.[9] According to this story, God wished to test Abram's loyalty under difficult circumstances. He therefore asked Abram to give up that which he loved most dearly. He was told to take his only son, Isaac, the one through whom all his hopes were to be realized, and offer him as a sacrifice. It would be difficult to imagine a command that would be harder to obey. However, Abraham met the test. He took his son, Isaac, two of his servants, wood to be used for the fire, and set out for the place where the offering was to be made. Upon their arrival at the designated place Abraham built an altar and put the wood in order upon it. He then bound his son Isaac and placed him upon the wood. Taking a knife in his hand he raised his arm to slay the boy when an angel of God appeared and stayed his hand. Abraham was told that it was now known that he was a faithful servant of God since he was ready to offer his son in obedience to the command he had received. Looking about Abraham saw a ram caught by his horns in a thicket. He then took the ram and offered it as a sacrifice in place of his son.

This story has some important implications. It reflects to some degree the older custom of offering the first-born son as a sacrifice to the deity. It also provided an illustration of the importance that was attached to obedience even at the cost of one's most cherished possessions. Most of all, it gave *E* an opportunity to express his conviction that God no longer required human sacrifices. He was willing to have an animal substituted for a human being, although obedience to God's commands was still the test of one's loyalty to God.

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[9] The story of the sacrifice of Isaac is found in Gen. 22:1-20.

In the story of Isaac's deception which led to the pronouncement of a blessing upon Jacob although it was intended for Esau, *E* is careful to safeguard the reputation of the father of the twelve tribes. In *J*'s story Jacob had deliberately deceived his father in order to gain the birthright. *E* explains the situation when he tells about Esau selling his birthright to Jacob for a mess of pottage.[10] To be sure, Jacob had taken advantage of his brother's hunger and famished condition. He had driven a rather shrewd bargain by offering to feed his brother only in exchange for the birthright. Still, the transaction did make Jacob the legal heir and this entitled him to receive the father's blessing. As to the deception that was involved when Jacob covered his hands and neck with goat skins so that Isaac would think it was Esau's body that he touched, *E* tells us that it was really Rebekah, the mother of the two sons, who was to blame. She had thought of this trick in the first place, and when Jacob had been reluctant to go through with it, she told him the curse (if there be one) would rest upon her. Jacob thus appears as one who was truthful and honest in all of these transactions.

Events which in the Judean history would appear to be the result of actions on the part of the patriarchs are explained by *E* as due to God's intervention. For example, *J* had said that Rachel, one of Jacob's wives, was barren and that eating mandrakes had enabled her to conceive. In *E*'s account of the same thing it was God who enabled her to bear Jacob a son.[11] In a similar manner *E* absolves Jacob of any unfair practices in acquiring animals for his own property. It will be recalled that the arrangement which Jacob had made with his uncle Laban was to the effect that he should work for the uncle seven years to obtain the daughter Rachel as a wife. At the end of the first seven years he was given her sister, Leah, as his wife. He then worked seven more years for Rachel. Following this he was to work seven years again to obtain cattle and flocks for himself.

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[10] Gen. 25:27-34.
[11] Gen. 30:22-23.

At the end of six years trouble broke out between Jacob and his uncle and the agreement came to an end. According to the agreement, all animals that were spotted were to belong to Jacob and those that were not spotted were to remain the property of the uncle. In *J*'s narrative, it would appear that Jacob deliberately bred the animals in such a manner that nearly all of them would be spotted. In other words, he played a clever trick on his uncle in order to gain property for himself. He had acted as a shrewd business man. As *E* tells the story, it was God's favor that rested upon Jacob and this was the reason why his flocks and herds increased so rapidly.[12] In the argument which takes place between Jacob and Laban one feels that it is Laban rather than Jacob who should be censored. Jacob has labored hard and honestly while his uncle has deceived him, first by giving him the wrong daughter in marriage, and later by changing his wages so many times.

One of the major purposes of the Ephraimite narrative is to counteract idol worship. Even so, the author does not try to conceal the fact that the ancestors of the Hebrew people had worshiped idols. This is brought out in the story concerning Rachel and the teraphim which she stole from her father.[13] When Jacob perceived that his uncle was no longer kindly disposed toward him, he called his wives and explained to them that they must leave the home of their father and go back to the country where Jacob had lived before coming to them. The wives were somewhat disturbed about leaving the property which they thought rightfully belonged to them. Since Jacob was planning to leave with his wives, children, and property while Laban was away taking care of his flocks, the women looked about to see what they might take with them. It was under these conditions that Rachel stole her father's teraphim and took them along with her as the family started out on their long journey toward Canaan.

When Laban returned from his flocks and discovered that Jacob with all of his family and possessions was gone, he started out after them. As soon as he was able to overtake the

[12] Gen. 31:8-10.
[13] Gen. 31:33-35.

company, he accused Jacob of dealing unfairly with him. Not only had he left the home place without giving Laban a chance to say good-bye to his daughters and grandchildren, but he had also stolen his teraphim. This was too much and Laban demanded that Jacob make proper restitution for what he had done. It would seem from the narrative that Jacob was unaware of what Rachel had done and so he told her father to search the camp and if he found the teraphim in possession of any one of the company that person would be put to death. Laban began at once to search the camp, going from one tent to another. When he came to Rachel's tent, she sat upon the teraphim and refused to get up, excusing herself on the ground that she was not well. *E*'s purpose in relating this story is apparently to ridicule the teraphim.[14] He did not want people to believe in them any more and he thought it would be difficult for anyone to take them seriously if they knew the contemptuous manner in which Rachel had treated them. As the story continues, Laban gives up the search and, after a full reconciliation with Jacob, goes back to his home. Meanwhile, Jacob and his family continue with their journey. As they near the homeland, Jacob sends a present to his brother Esau. When the two men meet after more than twenty years of separation, there is a happy reunion.

When Jacob and his family were encamped at Shechem the natives of the land desired to intermarry with the newcomers and, accordingly, they sent messengers to Jacob to inquire if this might be done. Permission was granted but only on condition that all the males of Shechem be circumcised according to the law of the Hebrews. The Shechemites agreed to this condition and marriages between these two groups of people took place. It was at Shechem that Jacob took all the foreign gods that were in the possession of members of his household and buried them under an oak tree. This bit of narrative would explain the popular veneration for these trees without giving any credit to the deities which had been supposed to dwell in them.

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[14] The term "teraphim" evidently refers to a household god. According to some scholars it was a figurine of the mother-goddess. It belonged to the head of the household and its possession made one the legitimate heir to the household goods. See E. W. K. Mould, *op. cit.,* pp. 118-19.

The story of Joseph is reported at great length in the Ephraimite history.[15] The author believes it is a marvelous illustration of the way in which a divine providence directs the activities of human beings even though they may be entirely unconscious of it themselves. He begins the story with an account of Joseph's two dreams, one having to do with the sheaves of grain and the other one pertaining to the sun, moon, and eleven stars. As these dreams were related to the members of the family, it was recognized that they were predictions which meant that in time all the family would make obeisance to Joseph. The brothers, in particular, resented this idea, and when Joseph was sent out to visit them where they were tending their flocks, they decided to get rid of him. Their first plan was to kill him and tell the father a beast had devoured him. Reuben, one of the brothers, persuaded the others not to do this but instead to put Joseph in a large dry pit. After Reuben had gone from the scene, a band of Midianites came by on their way to Egypt. They were merchantmen and it seemed to the other brothers a good opportunity to get rid of Joseph. Accordingly, they took him from the pit and sold him to the Midianites for twenty pieces of silver. When Reuben returned to the pit and saw that Joseph was gone, he rent his clothes in anguish. Then the brothers dipped Joseph's coat in the blood of a goat and returned it to Jacob saying they had found it. Jacob was overcome with grief and mourned many days for the loss of his son Joseph.

When the Midianites reached Egypt they in turn sold Joseph as a slave to Potiphar, the captain of Pharaoh's guard. Joseph, after he had proved himself through faithful service, was put in full charge of the house. When Joseph had been thrown in prison on false charges, there he interpreted the dreams of Pharaoh's baker and butler, both of whom were also serving prison sentences. At the end of two full years, Pharaoh had a dream in which he saw seven lean cattle and seven fat ones. The lean cattle devoured the fat ones but still remained as lean as they had been before. Pharaoh was disturbed about this dream and wondered what it could mean. When he learned that Joseph had interpreted the dreams of his butler and baker, he sent for him to interpret his dream concerning the cattle. Joseph explained that this dream was a prediction of what would happen during the years that were just ahead. For seven years the land would bear plentiful crops, more than enough to meet the needs of the people. Then for seven years there would be a famine when no crops could be raised at all. The years of famine would consume the surplus which had been accumulated from the years of plenty.

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[15] Although the Joseph story is reported in both *J* and *E,* it is more prominent in the Ephraimite narrative. Greater prominence is also given to Rachel, the mother of Joseph, and to the sanctuaries located at Shechem and Bethel.

After the dream had been interpreted, Pharaoh took Joseph out of prison and made him, next to himself, ruler over all Egypt. In this new position Joseph supervised the construction of storehouses and made provision for the surplus grain to be put aside during the seven years of plenty. Then came the seven years of famine. The famine was not only in Egypt but extended to the land of Canaan as well. This meant that Jacob and his household were affected by it. When their supply of provisions became low, Jacob sent ten of his sons to Egypt to buy food. The youngest son, Benjamin, remained at home with the father. The story of the ten sons in Egypt is recounted in detail. The meeting with Joseph whom they did not recognize, the demands made upon them to bring Benjamin with them when they came again, the holding of Simeon as a hostage, the return of the brothers to buy food the second time, Joseph making himself known to his brothers, the return to Canaan, and the final settlement of the entire family in Egypt, are all told with exquisite skill. It is one of the most delightful stories to be found in all the literature of the Old Testament. The full significance of the story is indicated in *E*'s own words which he presents as a part of Joseph's statement to his brothers.

> "And now do not be distressed, or angry with yourselves, because you sold me here; for God sent me before you to preserve life. For the famine has been in the land these two years; and there are yet five years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvest. And God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant on

> earth, and to keep alive for you many survivors. So it was not you who sent me here, but God; and he has made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house and ruler over all the land of Egypt." (Gen. 45:5-8)

After telling about the death of Jacob and Joseph, *E* begins with the story of Moses.[16] Prior to his birth, the Egyptian Pharaoh, becoming alarmed about the rapid increase of the Hebrew people in his land, had given orders that all the male children born of Hebrew parents should be put to death. The midwives were instructed to execute this command but they outwitted Pharaoh and God blessed them for protecting the newborn children.

When Moses was born, his mother succeeded in keeping him hidden for the first three months of his life. Then, fearing for his safety, she made an ark of bulrushes and placed the child in it. Going down to the river, she put the ark among some flags near the river's brink and went away. Her daughter remained close by so that she might learn what happened to the child. Soon after, Pharaoh's daughter came down with her maids to bathe in the river. She spied the ark in the bulrushes and asked one of the maids to fetch it to her. When she saw the child and heard him cry, her heart was moved with compassion even though she knew it was a Hebrew child. The child's sister who was standing by, asked Pharaoh's daughter if she should find a nurse among the Hebrew women who would care for the child. When told to do so, she secured Moses' own mother to act as his nurse, Pharaoh's daughter agreeing to pay her wages for performing this service.

It was while Moses was tending the flocks of his father-in-law Jethro, a Midianite priest, that he came to Mount Horeb which was known as the mount of God. As he approached the place, God called to him but Moses was afraid and hid his face as he dare not look upon God. God told Moses that he had heard the cry of the children of Israel and he had seen the oppression which the Egyptians had inflicted upon them. He now proposed to send Moses to Pharaoh in order that he might bring the Hebrew people out of the land of Egypt. It was on this occasion that Yahweh first revealed his name to Moses. He did this in response to Moses' statement that the children of Israel would want to know who had told him to come to Egypt and be their deliverer. Yahweh then made the name known and told Moses to declare to the children of Israel that Yahweh had spoken. We would infer from this story that *E* did not believe his people had worshiped a god named Yahweh prior to the time of Moses. It was true that the patriarchs might have worshiped the same god but under a different name. This would have made it possible for Moses to say to his fellow Hebrews that the god of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob had appeared to him and told him that he was to go to Egypt and deliver his people from their bondage. It is obvious that the beginnings of Yahweh worship are somewhat obscure both in the Judean and in the Ephraimite histories. *J* had said in his narrative that it was with Enosh, the grandson of Adam, that men first began to call on the name of Yahweh. *E* does not agree with this, for he thinks Yahweh worship was really introduced by Moses and this is one of the main reasons why he regarded the career of Moses as a most important factor in the history of his people.

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[16] Moses is idealized in the *E* narrative. The author makes it clear that he was no ordinary human being. He was the one person who had been permitted to look on the deity. He was able to perform miracles with his rod, and he was greater than any of the other prophets known by the Israelites.

When Yahweh commissioned Moses to go to Egypt he knew it would not be an easy task to persuade Pharaoh to let the Israelites go. He would not do it until some mighty hand was raised against him. Yahweh, however, assured Moses that he would smite Egypt with many wonders and when these were accomplished Pharaoh would be glad to let the people go. Moses was then equipped with a miracle-working rod that he could use to perform wonders in the sight of the Egyptians. Yahweh also gave instructions for the Hebrew women to despoil the homes of the Egyptians by taking their gold, silver, jewels, and fine raiment. Aaron was appointed to go with Moses and to assist him in the work of delivering Israel. When the two men appeared before Pharaoh with their request he very promptly refused them declaring that he did not recognize Yahweh and would, therefore, pay no attention to his commands.

Following this refusal on the part of Pharaoh, Moses used his magic rod to bring on a series of plagues in order that the ruler of Egypt might be persuaded to change his mind.[17] The first plague occurred when Moses took his rod and smote the waters of the Nile turning them into blood. Another plague consisted of hail mixed with fire which fell on all Egypt injuring both men and beasts. Again there was a plague of locusts. These little creatures were spread over the land devouring all the herbs and fruit which had not been destroyed by the hail. Still another plague consisted of a thick darkness which lasted for three full days. The darkness was so dense that the Egyptians were unable to see one another or carry on their work at all. The Israelites were not troubled in that way for their houses were full of light. After each one of these plagues, we are told, Pharaoh's heart was hardened and he would not let the Israelites go. At this point Moses threatened to bring on another plague after which Pharaoh would be more than anxious to have them leave. Then follows a story of the borrowing of goods from the homes of the Egyptians after which the Israelites marched out of the land with all their possessions. They were led by Moses who saw to it that they carried with them the bones of Joseph. Moses led them by way of the wilderness until they came to the Red Sea.

After the Israelites had left Egypt, Pharaoh pursued them with a great army which included "six hundred picked chariots, and all the other chariots of Egypt." At the Red Sea, Moses again used his rod for the deliverance of Israel and the destruction of the Egyptian army. *E* includes in his history at this point a brief song of deliverance which he credits to Miriam, the sister of Aaron. At Mount Horeb, Moses used his rod to strike the rock and obtain water for his people to drink. At Rephidim the Israelites fought against Amalek and his followers. Moses had instructed Joshua to select men to go out with him and fight against Amalek. On the following day he would stand on the top of a hill with his rod in his hand. It came to pass on the next day that so long as Moses would hold his hand in the air, the

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[17] In the *J* history Moses simply announces the coming of the plagues. In the *E* history, he uses the magic rod.

Israelites would prevail in battle. After a time Moses became weary and could no longer hold up his hands without assistance. Aaron and Hur who were along with him then stood on either side of Moses and held up his hands until the going down of the sun.

Jethro, the Midianite priest who was Moses' father-in-law, visited the Israelite camp and gave instructions concerning the organization of a judicial system. The task of settling all the disputes which were brought to him daily had grown too much for Moses. Jethro proposed that Moses use his time to teach the people the statutes and laws by which the people should live. For the settling of disputes which would arise among the people, he should select able and God-fearing men who love truth and who hate dishonest gain. These men should be made rulers of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties, and of tens and, in accordance with their separate jurisdictions, they were to judge the people at all seasons, bringing only the most difficult cases to Moses.

As the people were encamped before Mount Sinai, Yahweh appeared to Moses and told him to prepare the children of Israel to receive the words of the law. On the third day as the people assembled before the mount, Moses spoke and God answered him by a voice. As the people perceived the thunderings and lightnings, and smoke of the mount, they were afraid and said to Moses: "You speak to us, and we will hear; but let not God speak to us, lest we die."[18] Then Moses disappeared into the thick darkness where God revealed to him the content of the laws which he should proclaim to his people. The laws given to Moses were the ones included in the Book of the Covenant. After receiving the laws, Moses came before the people and in a solemn ceremony they promised to be obedient to all the words that had been spoken to them.

Once more Yahweh called Moses into the mount to deliver to him the tables of stone on which the Ten Commandments would be written. Moses was in the mount for forty days and nights. While he was gone, the people grew tired of waiting and asked Aaron to make gods to go before them. Taking the golden rings which the people had worn in their ears, Aaron fashioned a molten calf and presented it to the children of Israel saying this was the god that had brought them out of the land of Egypt. When Moses came down from the mount and saw what had been taking place in his absence, he was very angry. He took the tables of stone which were in his hand and broke them to pieces. After this he took the golden calf which the people had been worshiping and ground it to powder. He then mixed the powder with water and compelled the people to drink it. When Aaron was taken to task for what had been done, his defense was that the people had brought their gold to him and when he cast it into the fire this calf came out.[19] Here is another instance in which *E* shows his contempt for idol worship. He expects people to laugh at Aaron's explanation and he knows that ridicule is an effective instrument for getting rid of something that is undesirable.

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[18] Exod. 20:19.

As the Israelites moved from place to place, Yahweh's presence with them was indicated by a pillar of cloud which hovered over the tent used as a meeting place. Miriam was smitten with leprosy as a punishment for her criticism of Moses, but at the latter's request of Yahweh she was restored at the end of a seven-day period. Evidently *E* regarded criticism of Moses as a very serious offense for he reports another instance in which Dathan and Abiram were guilty of the same thing. After a stern rebuke by Moses, the earth opened and swallowed them. When the king of Edom refused to give the Israelites passage through his territory they were unable to follow the straight course which they had desired. During their journey they were troubled by fiery serpents which bit the people so that many of them died. It was then that Moses made a serpent of brass and put it on a standard. Anyone who had been bitten could look on this brazen serpent and be healed. *E* made it clear that the serpent had no power in itself to heal those who had been bitten. It was Yahweh who healed them. Looking at the serpent was only an act of obedience on the part of those who were following the instruction that had been given to them.

The blessing which Moses pronounced upon his people is recorded and an account is given of Moses' own death. At this point *E* pays a high tribute to the great leader of Israel: "And

[19] Exod. 32:24.

there has not arisen a prophet since in Israel like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face."[20]

After the death of Moses, Joshua became the leader of the people. Before crossing the Jordan river two spies were sent out to inspect the land and to find out what they could concerning the fortifications of the city of Jericho. When the ruler of the city learned about the presence of these two spies, he gave orders for their arrest. The spies were not captured, however, because they were befriended by a woman named Rahab who hid them in her house. Later she helped them to escape by letting them out of a window and lowering them over the wall of the city by means of a rope. Because of her kindness to them an agreement was made to protect her and the members of her household when the Israelites should gain possession of the city.

When the time came to cross the river, Joshua gave instruction for twelve men to be selected, one man for each of the twelve tribes of Israel. These men were to take stones from the bed of the river and erect an altar which would become a permanent memorial of this important occasion when they crossed the Jordan. After the crossing, the Israelites began the conquest of the land by capturing the city of Jericho. This event is described in considerable detail. The author tells about the many marchings around the city, the blowing of the trumpets, the shouts of the people, and finally the falling of the walls. When they entered the city, the Israelites remembered Rahab and protected the house where she stayed.

The sin of Achan, who kept for himself the wedge of gold and the goodly Babylonish garment, is presented as the chief reason why the Israelites were unable to capture the city of Ai when they first marched against it. Later, Joshua set out by night with thirty thousand men. Leaving the greater portion of his forces in ambush, he succeeded in drawing the inhabitants out of the town. At the proper moment the Israelites fell upon them in full force winning complete possession of the city. Hearing about the conquests of Jericho and Ai, the Gibeonites sent messengers to Joshua and secured from him a treaty which made the Gibeonites servants of the children of Israel but permitted them to dwell peacefully in the land. Joshua defeated the kings in south Canaan who were allied with Adoni-zedek, after which he defeated the kings in north Canaan who were allied with Jabin of Hazor. An account is given of the division of the land among the various tribes and in the story of Joshua's farewell address, *E* delivers an exhortation on the theme which is closest to his heart. The great lesson which Yahweh would have impressed on the minds of all his people is expressed in the words which are attributed to Joshua:

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[20] Deut. 34:10.

> "Now therefore fear the Lord, and serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness; put away the gods which your fathers served beyond the River, and in Egypt, and serve the Lord." (Josh. 24:14)

It is quite possible that *E* may have closed his history with the story of Joshua's death. Many scholars believe he continued his narrative to include the period of the Judges, the establishment of the monarchy, and the tragic end of Saul's career. If *E* did not write this part of the history, it was carried out by someone who was sympathetic with his point of view. This can be seen in the account which is given of the judges who ruled over Israel. The experiences which came to the Hebrews in their contacts with the Canaanites are always regarded as tests of their loyalty to Yahweh. Whenever they were faithful in the observance of all of his commandments, Israel prospered. Disaster was always their lot when they disobeyed.

That the author was one who believed in a theocracy rather than the monarchial form of government can be seen in several of the stories which are related. One of these is concerned with Gideon who is known as one of the more successful of the judges of Israel. When the people offered to make him king, he refused and said to them: "I will not rule over you, and my son will not rule over you; the Lord will rule over you." The story of Jotham's fable of the trees which is included in this history illustrates again the author's belief that anyone who thinks he is qualified to be king will probably be an inferior person. The story of Abimelech and the fate which befell him lent further support to the same view.

The most important of the stories supporting his belief in the theocracy is the one concerning Saul, the first king of Israel. According to this narrative, Yahweh had never intended that Israel should have a king. It was not until the people demanded it, so they could be "like the other nations" that he ever permitted them to have one. Even then, he warned the people through the prophet Samuel that the time would come when they would regret having asked for a king. Saul, the son of Kish, was chosen by lot to be the first king. Yahweh was displeased and sent thunder and lightning as evidence of the fact. Seeing these signs of Yahweh's disapproval the people were afraid and confessed "we have added to all our sins this evil, to ask for a king." In Saul's war with the Amalekites he had been told to slay every living creature, not sparing any of the women, children, or even the beasts which belonged to the enemy. When Saul did spare King Agag and some of the animals which he intended to use as a sacrifice, he was denounced by the prophet in no uncertain terms. For his failure to give complete obedience to the commands of Yahweh, Saul was rejected as king and his career came to an inglorious end.

Values of the Early Ephraimite History

The Ephraimite history is, in many respects, one of the most important documents that has been preserved from the literature of northern Israel. From the historical point of view, it has certain advantages over the Judean history which was produced a century earlier. The author did not attempt so vast an undertaking. He began with the story of Abram and thus omitted any account of the events which preceded that time. His stories about the patriarchs reflect popular traditions of Israel's ancestors, and the numerous references which are made to trees, pillars, wells, and other objects connected with early Canaanitish religion would indicate some factual basis for the events which are related. It is important in this connection to note that the ancestors of the Hebrew people are presented as idol worshipers. For one who was opposed to this practice as strongly as *E,* this was quite an admission and argues strongly in favor of the reliability of his account.

It is obvious to anyone who reads the Ephraimite history that one of its purposes is to teach certain moral and religious lessons. Most of all, he wants to make it clear that strict obedience to the commands of Yahweh is required above everything else. Yahweh will not tolerate the worship of other gods. Anyway, there is nothing to be gained from paying attention to them. They are powerless and can do nothing when they are treated with scorn and contempt. *E* recognizes the pillars that for the older Canaanites had been sacred objects, but he explains that they are only memorials which commemorate actions of the patriarchs. The serpent in the wilderness was only a symbol. It was Yahweh who really healed the ones who had been bitten. The golden calf made by Aaron and the teraphim belonging to Rachel's father are objects to be laughed at instead of being worshiped.

The lesson of obedience is illustrated in almost every part of the history. In no place does it stand out more clearly than in the story of the sacrifice of Isaac. The greatness of Abram which made him well qualified to be the progenitor of the Hebrew people rested primarily on the fact that he was obedient to the divine command, even though it seemed to be contrary to everything which a human being would regard as good. The same point is brought out again toward the close of the history in the story of King Saul and his disobedience in sparing Agag and the animals which he intended to offer as a sacrifice. The prophet Samuel expresses the idea, which *E* hopes his readers will never forget, when he denounces Saul for his sin and tells him "to obey is better than sacrifice, and to harken than the fat of rams."

From the point of view of Israel's religious ideals, it is interesting to note the way in which *E* sets forth the idea of progress in divine revelation. The Israelites have not always understood the deity in the way they think of him now. This does not mean that *E* believes the character of Yahweh has changed. It is our human understanding of him that has gone through its periods of development. Before the time of Abram the ancestors had worshiped idols. Abram became a prophet of God, but the full revelation of Yahweh did not take place until the time of Moses. Since the period of the exodus from Egypt, the people have been given many opportunities through the instruction of the prophets and by means of their own experience to learn more about his character and his relationship to them. There is another way, too, in which *E* illustrates the progressive character of divine revelation. A comparison of his conception of deity with the one which is found in the Judean history will indicate that considerable progress has been made during the century which elapsed between the writing of these two documents. In the first place *E* does not accept the anthropomorphism which gives God a physical body and pictures him as walking about in the cool of the day and eating food in the company of human beings. For *E,* God is a spirit whose dwelling is in the heavens above the earth and who communicates with human beings through dreams and visions. With reference to moral qualities there seems to be even more evidence of progress in the Ephraimite history. In the stories concerning the patriarchs the advantages which are gained are not accomplished by trickery and deception as was true in the case of the *J* narrative. Abram's statement that Sarah was his sister is presented as being at least a half-truth inasmuch as she was his half-sister. Jacob is absolved from any blame in getting the birthright from his brother, and it was due to the blessing of God that his flocks and herds increased so rapidly. All of this indicates that practices which were not condemned when *J* wrote his history are no longer approved. Ethical ideals are on a higher plane although there is still much to be desired in this respect.

Opposition to the monarchy and praise for the theocratic conception of state is another characteristic of this history. This is a part of *E*'s deep conviction that all is well with matters of state only when the people are living in strict obedience to the commands of God. If they have a king to rule over them, he will be thinking about material advantages and social prestige instead of carrying out the will of God. Then, too, the king will not be careful to respect the rights of the people. Because he possesses power he will be tempted to use it for his own glory. If he departs from the divine will, the people will suffer.

Chapter 7

PROPHECY IN ISRAEL

The Meaning of Prophecy

Approximately one-third of the writings in the Old Testament were produced by a group of men who are known to us as the Hebrew prophets. The significance of these writings can scarcely be overestimated. Their influence can be seen in other portions of the Old Testament literature and many of the ideas which were first expressed by the prophets have been incorporated in the writings of the New Testament. Not only Judaism but Christianity and, to a lesser extent, other religions of the world are indebted to these prophets. They represent in many respects the real genius of the Hebrew people and they were responsible, in no small measure, for the greatness of the religious ideals which that race has given to mankind. The development of beliefs and practices which were characteristic of the early Canaanite period into a religion of justice and social righteousness was accomplished largely through their efforts. No one can hope to understand either the New Testament or the Old Testament apart from the work of these men.

In spite of the significance which rightly attaches to these prophetic writings they have often been neglected and even more frequently they have been misunderstood. There are many reasons why this is true. One reason is to be found in the erroneous conception which has prevailed in some quarters concerning the chief function or business of the prophet. It has often been held that the chief work of the prophet was to foretell the future. For example, Justin Martyr, one of the early church fathers, wrote as follows: "There were among the Jews certain men who were prophets of God, through whom the prophetic spirit published beforehand things that were to come to pass ere ever they happened."[1] This conception of the prophetic function was held for a long time by the leading scholars of the Christian church and it still prevails among those who do not accept the methods and results of the movement known as Higher Criticism. But in spite of the fact that this view is a time-honored one and has many adherents at the present time, it is not supported by the most reliable information which we possess today concerning the character and work of the Hebrew prophets.

These men were not concerned primarily with the prediction of future events. Their most important function was to proclaim the word of Yahweh with reference to those events which were current at the times when they lived. They talked to the people of their own day about the problems which were facing them at that time. It is true that they did often make some reference to the future. That is to be expected for no one can interpret the events and conditions of the day in which he lives and avoid making some predictions concerning the future. Statesmen and religious teachers of the present day are always telling us what they believe is going to happen. That is a part of the method which they use in making clear their analysis of the present. The Hebrew prophets did a similar thing. Whenever they talked about the future they did so on the basis of what they saw in the present. They interpreted current events in the light of their understanding of the deity and his relation to the activities of men and nations. They believed a divine purpose was manifest in the course of history and it was this purpose which constituted the basis for the predictions which they made.

In some respects the work of these prophets is analogous to the interpretations of contemporary social scientists. Neither the scientists nor the prophets believed that events are merely a matter of chance. Neither did they believe the course of history is determined entirely by the choices of human beings. In both cases it has been recognized that events are controlled, at least in part, by forces over which human beings have no control. With respect to the nature of these forces the prophetic interpretation was quite different from that of the modern scientist. Instead of laws of nature which are illustrated in particular events, the prophets found their explanation in the nature and will of Yahweh. However, they believed his nature remained constant and for this reason it furnished a basis for the statements which they made with reference to the future.[2]

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[1] See Justin Martyr's first *Apologia,* No. CXXXI, I, *The Ante-Nicean Fathers,* Vol. I (New York: Chas. Scribner's Sons, 1899–1900).

Another reason for the failure of many people to understand the prophets is that their writings are so difficult to read. They were produced under conditions that are very different from what we experience at the present time. When a modern book comes from the press there are certain things that we can know about it. We can know the author's name, the time and place of publication, the purpose for which it was written, and the readers for whom it was intended. All of this information is important insofar as it helps us to understand what the author has to say. In the case of the Old Testament prophets, this information is lacking. There is no preface or introduction which furnishes us with an adequate background for an interpretation of their writings. The prophets were what we would call at the present time practical preachers. Their discourses had to do with local events and contemporary situations. Something would happen at a particular place and the prophet would deliver an oracle or address concerning it. Later the prophet or someone who worked under his direction would write down the message which had been delivered. The writing would be done on parchment or other expensive material and it was necessary to conserve space. For this reason only the message itself would be recorded. No space could be given for an introduction or for any explanation about the conditions which called it forth. Perhaps a month or a year later the same prophet would deliver another message concerning an entirely different theme and having to do with other conditions. In due time this message would be recorded along with the first one and without any space separating the two accounts. This process would continue until the sheet of parchment was filled. Should the prophet die before the sheet was filled, the editors whose business it was to preserve the manuscripts could not allow this space to be wasted. They would try to find something worthy of being preserved and insert it along with the other writings. A knowledge of these facts helps us to understand the sketchy, disconnected character of many of the prophetic writings.

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[2] The conception of prophecy as prediction of things to come is due in part to a confusion of prophetic with apocalyptic writings. See Chapter 17 for a description of the major characteristics of apocalyptic writings. See also in this connection R. B. Y. Scott, *The Relevance of the Prophets* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1947), pp. 4-6.

Before one can understand the message of a given prophet it is necessary to reconstruct the background from which it was produced. Such factors as the place of writing, the time of writing, the personality of the writer, the social and economic conditions which prevailed at the time, the literary forms which were used, the meaning of the proper names which occur, and the central purpose which the author had in mind, are all very important and it is only insofar as these are known by the reader that he can hope to grasp the full meaning of the message which the prophet tried to convey. Unfortunately for readers of today, this information is seldom given directly in connection with any of the prophetic writings. It must be gained by putting together the relevant material found in all of the available sources. It is for this reason that some reliable *Introduction* is, as a general rule, an essential for the average person if he is to read intelligently the prophetic portions of the Old Testament.[3]

Forerunners of the Prophets

Prophecy among the Hebrews has a long and interesting history. Like other institutions which belonged to the culture of the Hebrew people it began in a primitive fashion and reached its peak only after a long period of development. In its early beginnings it seems to have been closely associated with the practice of magic and with the exercise of the spirit of divination.

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[3] There are many good introductions to the study of prophetic writings available at the present time. Among them we may note the following: John Paterson, *The Goodly Fellowship of the Prophets* (New York: Chas. Scribner's Sons, 1949); R. B. Y. Scott, *op. cit.;* H. H. Rowley, *Studies in Old Testament Prophecy* (New York: Chas. Scribner's Sons, 1950); Rolland E. Wolfe, *Meet Amos and Hosea* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1945); J. M. P. Smith, *The Prophets and Their Times* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1925); and C. J. Harrell, *The Prophets of Israel* (Nashville: Cokesbury Press, 1933).

Some of these practices had no doubt been borrowed by the Israelites from their Canaanite neighbors. For instance, we read of "diviners" among the Philistines during the times of Samuel.[4] Joseph was thought to have possessed the power of divination,[5] and the same was true of Balaam, the prophet who tried to curse Israel but who failed in the attempt to do so.[6] The laws of Deuteronomy strictly forbade the practice of divination among the Hebrews,[7] but evidently it must have continued among them to some extent, for as late as the close of the eighth century both Isaiah and Micah were strong in their condemnation of it.

Following the diviners and preceding the prophets there arose in Israel a small group of men who were known as the "seers." Samuel was one who belonged to this group.[8] They employed strange devices in their work and they claimed to be able to foretell the future as well as to solve many of the mysterious problems which occur in everyday life. In fact their function resembled in many respects that of the modern fortune teller or the clairvoyant. They supported themselves by charging fees for their services. An instance may be found in the story concerning Saul's visit to Samuel.[9] According to the narrative, Saul in company with one of his father's servants had gone on an extended trip searching for some lost asses which belonged to Saul's father. The search had proved unsuccessful and Saul proposed to the servant that they abandon it and return home lest his father should become more worried about them and their fate than he was about finding the lost animals. At this point the servant suggested that before returning home they should first call at the house of a nearby seer and if possible secure his services in locating the lost asses. Saul asked the servant if he had any money to pay the seer and when the servant replied that he had a quarter of a shekel it was agreed that they should go and see him. Probably they were not overconfident of the seer's ability to solve their problem or they would have looked for him sooner. At any rate they decided it would be worth risking a quarter of a shekel in the hope that he could aid them in finding the animals for which they had been searching.

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[4] I Sam. 6:2.
[5] Gen. 44:15.
[6] Num. 22:7-8.
[7] Deut. 18:10-14.
[8] I Sam. 9:10.
[9] I Sam. 9.

Samuel is classed in the Old Testament with both the seers and the prophets. His career may be regarded as marking the period of transition from the one group to the other. In this respect we may think of him as closing the line of seers and beginning the line of prophets. His name is usually included in the lists of Israel's prophets and one writer, while enumerating the heroes of the Hebrew people, uses the expression "Samuel and the prophets" in a way that would indicate Samuel headed the list.[10] Moses, it is true, was also regarded as a prophet and there is much about the character of his work that would seem to merit this classification. However, he was not called a prophet at the time when he lived and he is generally regarded as the lawgiver rather than a prophet. Deborah, whose war song written in commemoration of an early Israelite victory over the Canaanites constitutes one of the oldest sources for our knowledge of Hebrew history, was also styled a prophetess. In one sense it is appropriate to refer to her in this way for she was a "spokesman" for Yahweh, but in comparison with the work of later prophets her contribution was of minor importance. Samuel was one of the first to be styled a prophet by the people of his own day. It was with him that the prophetic office really came into prominence and after his time we hear no more of the seers. He was one who professed to speak for Yahweh and he evidently gave a good deal of encouragement to the prophetic function, for it was during his time that we first hear of the "schools of the prophets." These schools became important centers in which men were trained for bearing responsibilities in the religious and political life of the nation. The schools were located in various parts of the country. We read of one at Jericho,[11] another one at Gilgal,[12] a third one at Gibeah,[13] and

[10] Heb. 11:32.
[11] II Kings 2:5.
[12] II Kings 4:38.
[13] I Sam. 10:5.

still another one at Ramah.[14] There were probably other schools besides these. Located in close proximity to the Yahweh sanctuaries it was possible for those who would attend these schools to receive instruction and inspiration from the various forms of worship with which they would be brought into contact. In this way the schools would foster the development of both religious zeal and patriotic fervor. In fact these two attitudes were so closely related in those days that one could scarcely distinguish between them.

Early Manifestations of Prophecy

The office of the prophet did not in Samuel's day have the prestige or significance that came to be attached to it in later generations. The moral and religious teachings with which we are accustomed to associate the names of Israel's greatest prophets did not appear all at once. We find little of it in the work of the earliest prophets. Their ideas and their methods of work were for the most part of a primitive character. Making considerable use of methods which bear a close resemblance to the practice of magic, they spent much of their time searching for the solution of mysterious problems and forecasting the outcome of future events. The early prophets wore a distinctive kind of dress and they usually carried a distinguishing mark, a scar made by an incision on the forehead between the eyes.

The religious fervor of these early prophets was often expressed in a strange manner. For instance, the prophet would be "seized by the spirit" [15] and thrown into a fit of emotional excitement during which he might sing, dance, go into a trance, or possibly behave in some very outlandish manner. This possession of the prophetic spirit was contagious and it would often happen that the spirit spread quickly not only among those who claimed to be prophets but among others as well. For example, we read in I Sam. 19:18-24 that King Saul and three groups of his messengers were caught by the prophetic spirit and they all prophesied. The occasion for this performance was as follows.

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[14] I Sam. 19:19-20.

[15] I Sam. 19:20.

David had been forced to flee from the court of Saul. He had taken refuge with the prophet Samuel at Naioth. As soon as Saul learned where David was hiding he immediately sent messengers to Naioth to take him prisoner. As soon as these messengers approached the little village they beheld Samuel and several others with him in the midst of a prophetic frenzy. It was not long before the messengers were also "caught by the spirit" and they prophesied. The same thing happened again with a second and with a third group whom Saul sent out to capture David. Finally, Saul decided to go after David himself. But alas, the same thing happened to him. He, too, was seized by the prophetic spirit. In fact he was so completely possessed by this spirit that he came before Samuel and prophesied stripping off his clothes and lying naked on the ground for a day and a night. It was this conduct on the part of the king that brought forth the inquiry, "Is Saul also among the prophets?" The question was asked contemptuously and was designed to express the dissatisfaction of the people that so dignified a personage as the king should be found conducting himself after the frenzied manner of the prophets.

Such manifestations of the prophetic spirit must not be taken as a true characterization of the institution of prophecy as a whole. They pertain for the most part only to the beginnings of the prophetic movement although, to be sure, there were always some among Israel's prophets who failed to see anything more in their work than a species of magical performance or a means of ministering to their own selfish interests.

Some of the prophets of the Old Testament are referred to as "hirelings." This term was used to designate the prophets who regarded their work as a kind of profession from which they derived their material support. Since they charged fees for their services they were dependent on the good will of the people to whom they ministered. To promote this friendly attitude they were inclined to speak only those messages which would be pleasing to the ones who would hear them. They were not free to condemn the vices which flourished in their midst nor could they speak critically of the conduct of the people who supported them. They were the ones who prophesied for money, told lies in order to win the favor of the people and who would stop at nothing which they believed would contribute to their own gain. Because the reputation of this class of prophets had become so widely known, Amos, one of the truly great spokesmen for Yahweh, felt it necessary to disclaim any connection at all with the class of prophets.[16]

One should be careful not to confuse these hireling prophets with such men as Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel. It was these last named prophets whose contributions to the field of moral and religious teaching were among the greatest that the world has ever known. Although historically these two classes of prophets had a common origin, the character of their work presents a most striking contrast. In the one class we find prophecy at its lowest level and in the other one we have prophecy at its highest level or, in other words, prophecy at its best. It was to this class that the great prophets of the Old Testament belonged. Because of the influence of their personalities and the lasting significance of their work, the term "Hebrew prophecy" has come to be associated almost exclusively with them.

Kings, Priests, and the Prophets

During the earlier periods of Hebrew national history it was customary for the prophets to work in close connection with the kings. Religion was in those days so thoroughly interwoven with the political affairs of the nation that whatever happened in one of these areas affected the other. Loyalty to the nation was identified with loyalty to Yahweh. It was important for the king in directing the affairs of the state, to be fully informed of any message which Yahweh might have for his people. Naturally this message would be brought to him either by a priest or by a prophet. Since the priests were more directly concerned with matters pertaining to the forms and manner of worship, it was usually the prophet who spoke for Yahweh in regard to political affairs. Since the prophet believed it was his function to proclaim whatever message Yahweh had given to him, he would not hesitate to criticize the king or to condemn his actions

[16] Amos 7:14.

whenever he thought they were contrary to the divine will. Whenever the nation was confronted with a crisis or the king was forced to make an important decision, it was not uncommon for the head of the government to seek out the prophet and inquire of him what Yahweh's attitude was toward the particular policy he had in mind. Sometimes he would not do this until the situation had become desperate and even then the instruction given by the prophet would not always be followed.[17] There are many instances recorded in which the prophet's interpretation of the divine will was so directly opposed to the wishes of the king that a serious breach developed between them. Under these conditions the king might employ measures designed to hinder seriously the work of the prophet. This would of course make the task of the prophet very difficult. It meant for him a loss of whatever prestige he had acquired from his close association with the king. Further, it would mean that he would receive no support from the royal treasury and much of the time he would have to carry on his work in direct opposition to the king. This in itself would be sufficient to brand him in the eyes of many people as a traitor to his country and an enemy of the religion of Yahweh.

In addition to these difficulties, which the prophet frequently encountered in his relationship with the king, opposition would sometimes come directly from the priests. The priests, no less than the prophets, stood between the people and Yahweh. They were the ones who officiated at the offering of sacrifices. They gave instruction concerning the place of worship, the forms of worship, and the manner in which the worship should be conducted. They were important religious leaders to whom the people looked for guidance in carrying out the will of the deity. But their understanding of Yahweh and his requirements for the people of Israel did not always coincide with the teaching of the prophets. There were times when it seemed to them that the prophetic oracles were dangerous to the welfare of the state. An instance of this kind can be seen in the attitude of Amaziah the priest, after Amos had prophesied at the Beth-el sanctuary.

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[17] An instance of this kind can be seen in Isa. 7, where King Ahaz has received counsel from the prophet but acted contrary to it.

"O seer, go, flee away to the land of Judah, and eat bread there, and prophesy there; but never again prophesy at Bethel, for it is the king's sanctuary, and it is a temple of the kingdom." [18]

This conflict between Amaziah and Amos which took place in the northern kingdom during the reign of Jeroboam II has sometimes been interpreted as typical of the contrasting points of view represented by the priest and the prophet. It has been maintained, for example, that the priest was always interested primarily in matters pertaining to the ritual while the prophet saw little if any value in ritualistic observances but was interested only in the moral requirements involved in the achievement of justice and social righteousness. Although there are some instances in Old Testament literature in which priest and prophet respectively reflect these two opposite points of view, we are not justified in saying that it was generally true. The priests were not always opposed to the moral instruction of the prophets nor were the prophets necessarily opposed to the work of the priests. As a general rule they worked together toward the one purpose of bringing the people into harmony with the will of Yahweh. Both of them were charged with the responsibility of giving guidance and counsel to the people and both of them were intermediaries between Yahweh and the people. In each of the two groups there were some who fulfilled their responsibilities better than others. This accounts for the occasional conflict that we find between particular priests and prophets rather than any fundamental difference between the two groups. Actually they often worked in such close cooperation that it is not always easy to distinguish between them.

The chief difference between priest and prophet is to be found in the manner in which they received their inspiration and the methods which they used for carrying their instruction to the people. The prophet, as a general rule, acted through personal inspiration while the priest received his instruction by means of tradition and his experience in connection with the handling of sacred objects and the conduct of various forms of worship. His work was carried on in the temple or in one of the regular established sanctuaries where people came for the performance of their religious duties. The prophet, on the other hand, did not confine his work to the place of the sanctuary but he went among the people and proclaimed whatever message Yahweh had given to him. This was especially true when the message had to do with the social, economic, and political conditions which prevailed at the time.

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[18] Amos 7:13.

Although Hebrew prophecy in the earlier stages of its development was characterized by strange types of ecstatic behavior such as dancing, singing, going into a trance, and the use of divination, the age of great prophecy which began with Amos in the eighth century had advanced far beyond this emotional professionalism. It became the dominant factor in the production of a new conscience for the nation. Interpreting the demands of Yahweh in terms of meeting the requirements of justice and social righteousness, these prophets called for a reformation in the political, economic, and social life of the Hebrew people. As they saw it, Yahweh desired moral conduct on the part of his people more than he desired anything else. The ritual had value only as it contributed toward this end. Whenever it appeared to them that the observance of ritualistic requirements did not help the people to reach high moral standards they were ready to dispense with the system entirely. They did not believe that a man could really serve Yahweh and at the same time take unfair advantage of his fellow men. No amount of sacrificing, observance of fasts, or making of long prayers could ever atone for an individual so long as he continued to oppress the poor or to enrich himself by getting dishonest gain. Yahweh demanded justice and fair dealings on the part of his people and this was the only type of worship that was really pleasing to him. The requirements which he demanded of his people are summarized beautifully in these words from the Book of Micah:

> He has showed you, O man, what is good;
> and what does the LORD require of you
> but to do justice, and to love kindness,
> and to walk humbly with your God?
> (Mic. 6:8)

This emphasis on moral conduct, as an essential element in the worship of Yahweh, was the greatest single contribution of the Hebrew prophets. We are greatly indebted to them for many of the finest elements that can be found in both Judaism and Christianity. Although the point of view which they expressed was that of a small minority, and in spite of the fact they were usually regarded by most of their contemporaries as fanatics, heretics, and radicals, they were the ones most responsible for the moral progress which characterized the development of the Hebrew religion. They dared to break with the customs and standards of their own day and to proclaim their conception of religion in terms of the motives and obligations which have to do with the highest welfare of human beings. They placed the major emphasis on inner motives rather than external acts and they identified the will of Yahweh with the moral and spiritual development of individuals and of society.

Jesus of Nazareth, as He is revealed in the literature of the New Testament, was in His day and age the logical successor of the ancient Hebrew prophet. He was frequently referred to by His contemporaries as a prophet. He accepted this title and on at least one occasion He applied it to Himself. His conception of religion had much in common with them. Like the older prophets, Jesus disparaged the idea that ritual in itself is an adequate means for salvation. He taught rather that men's love for God would find its best expression in the way they treated their fellow men. One New Testament writer asserts his connection with the prophetic line by declaring that "the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."[19]

Suggestions for Reading the Prophets

We have mentioned some of the difficulties that are involved in trying to understand the prophetic literature of the Old Testament. These are due chiefly to the manner in which the oracles were first delivered and the procedure that was followed in writing them down. If we are to reconstruct from the writings, appearing in our Bible at the present time, the ideas which the prophets were trying to express in their own day, it will be necessary to keep in mind certain facts concerning them.

[19] Rev. 19:10.

In the first place we must remember that the prophecies are not presented to us in their chronological order. Indeed, there seems to be little order of any kind in the way some of them have been arranged. Oracles which were given during the latter part of the prophet's ministry are sometimes placed before the ones which were given during the earlier part of his career. A single chapter may contain two or more oracles delivered at different times and having to do with different themes. The size of the sheets of parchment on which they were written, the amount of space used in each instance, and convenience in the matter of preserving the messages, seem to have been the chief considerations in determining the order in which they have been placed. We must remember, too, that it was not the prophet himself who made the final arrangement of the materials. This work was done by scribes and editors some of whom lived a long time after the work of the prophet had been finished.

In view of this, the modern reader needs to rearrange the materials so that they will appear in the order in which they were first given. It is, of course, impossible to be certain about the order of the prophetic messages in every instance, but the reader must make the closest approximation which the evidence affords. Familiarity with facts concerning the prophet's life and the conditions which prevailed at the time when he lived are the chief guides that one must follow in making this rearrangement. Sometimes oracles were spoken without any particular reference to local conditions. Consequently a reconstruction of the background from which they were given is not so important. Their meaning will be fairly clear without it. This is not true when the prophet was speaking directly to certain individuals about specific issues current at the time. Information concerning these individuals and the issues before them is essential for an understanding of the message and at the same time gives a clue to the order or time in which it was given.

Another important fact with reference to the Old Testament prophets is that they did not write everything which we find today in the books which bear their names. It is not uncommon to find within a single prophetic book ideas which are in direct conflict with one another. For example, in the Book of Amos we have a clear statement from the prophet that the kingdom of Israel will go into captivity and shall never rise again.[20] However, in a later chapter of the same book the statement is made that the nation will return from its captivity and a description is given of the peace and prosperity which will characterize the restored state.[21] It is difficult if not impossible to reconcile these two statements if we assume that they were both written by the same person. What seems far more probable is that Amos was the author of the first one and an editor, who belonged to another and later period, added the second statement in order to present the work of Amos from the point of view of subsequent history.

There are many evidences of editorial work in the prophetic writings of the Old Testament. Sometimes historical material, derived from some other source, has been included with the prophetic messages. For instance, in the Book of Jeremiah we find about as much space given to historical accounts as for a record of the prophet's own sayings. Occasionally, editors or copyists would insert their own comments or explanations when the text itself did not seem to them to be complete or adequate. All of these additions and editorial comments create new problems for the modern reader. He must determine, as nearly as he can, the content of the original message so that it will not be confused with later additions. In the case of editorial comments or added materials he must try to find out why they were written. In some instances it may have been due to the fact that the original copy was so badly damaged the copyist could only guess at some of its contents. At other times the contents may have been clear but because of some problem which was raised by them a further explanation seemed to be needed. Sometimes additions seemed to be needed in order to bring the original message into harmony with more recent facts of history. It is in the light of these various possibilities that the reader must arrive at his own interpretation of the real meaning of the text which he finds.

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[20] Amos 5:2.
[21] Amos 9:11, 14.

The personality of the prophet and the forms of expression which he used are also important factors to be taken into account. If the prophet was a poet, the emotional tone of his writing and his use of metaphors would be quite different from those employed by a prosaic writer. The poet would not hesitate to express his own personal feelings about a particular issue. His primary concern would be not the presentation of a logical argument but rather the expression of an insight which he had felt within his own soul. Sometimes the prophets employed irony or they spoke in satirical terms about the actions of their contemporaries. When it seemed appropriate to them to do so, they would employ a dramatic form of writing using as many characters as they found necessary to present different points of view. Although these forms of expression were very useful to the prophets in the presentation of their messages to their contemporaries, they add to the difficulties which face the modern reader in trying to understand their writings. He must first decide what form of expression is being used. If it is the dramatic form, he must determine the characters that are used and the statements that must be assigned to each one. This is not always an easy task but it is essential if one is to arrive at a correct interpretation of the literature.

As we have mentioned before, an understanding of the writings of the Hebrew prophets presupposes familiarity with the political, social, and economic conditions prevailing at the time they lived. The reason for this is obvious when we stop to consider that the prophets were, above everything else, spokesmen for Yahweh concerning the specific, concrete issues which had to do with their own time. They were, in a very real sense of the word, practical preachers. They talked to the people of their own day about conditions as they existed then. They tried vitally to interpret the conditions and events in which their people were interested, and to do so in the light of those ideas and moral values which they associated with the name and will of the deity. Like practical preachers of the present day, their oracles were full of local color. Religion was, for them, something that had to do with the affairs of human life. It was concerned with the affairs of the state as well as with matters of a more individual nature. It had to do with economic policies, with domestic issues and with international affairs. In brief, their religion was something that touched all phases of individual and social life. Hence the prophets in proclaiming their religious ideals to the people were always making some reference to local conditions. That kind of preaching was most valuable for the people of their day. It helped them to understand the relationship which should exist between their religion and the affairs of their daily lives. It made religion less abstract for them, and gave particular emphasis to its concrete expression in particular instances. However, with all of its advantages to them, that kind of preaching on their part is not the easiest for us to understand today. Their brief and ready references to local conditions and events mean nothing to us until we reconstruct in our minds the period in which they lived. The proper names which they used are meaningful to us only when we find out what they meant when the prophets used them. However, the effort which is required for a reconstruction of this background is something that brings a rich reward. It enables the reader to discover the real genius of the prophetic mind. It places within his grasp the meaning of those messages which, though first prompted by local conditions which existed in ancient Israel, contain those vital elements of religious truth that have been an inspiration to every succeeding generation.

Prophecy in Israel, though it began in an humble way, did in the course of a few centuries reach heights of attainment that have seldom if ever been surpassed. The prophetic movement is one with which the people of the present generation should be familiar. The lessons which the prophets tried to teach to their people are significant now, for back of their local instruction can be found those moral ideas whose application is as meaningful to one age or generation as it is to any other. Although Israel's prophetic period came to its close many centuries ago, the world has never caught up with the ideals which were first proclaimed at that time. As H. T. Fowler has remarked in his book *A History of the Literature of Ancient Israel,* "It is not difficult to support the claim that the best social and religious thinking of today is moving in the channels first clearly indicated by Israel's prophets."[22]

Prophets Prior to the Eighth Century

Although Israel's prophetic movement did not reach any pinnacle of achievement until the latter half of the eighth century when Amos, the herdsman of Tekoa, delivered his messages to the people of the northern kingdom, there were prophets prior to this time. Many of them were inconspicuous persons about whom very little is known. Sometimes only the name of the prophet has been recorded and in other instances a brief story about one or more of their activities has been preserved. Occasionally the work of a prophet was highly significant because of the contribution which he made to the development of a conception of the deity. In this way he helped to prepare the way for the greater prophetic movement which followed.

Since the term "prophet" refers to those individuals who speak for Yahweh, there is a sense in which Moses may be regarded as one who belonged to this group. It is true that we usually think of him as a lawgiver rather than a prophet but he was certainly a "spokesman" for Yahweh and one of the first to interpret his will to the Hebrew people. We have spoken of a covenant relationship between Yahweh and Israel. It is highly probable that Moses was the one who introduced this idea and we know that it had important consequences in helping to shape the thinking of later prophets.

During the period of the judges which preceded the establishment of the monarchy, another spokesman for Yahweh appeared in the person of Deborah, a prophetess who was also one of the judges of Israel. Her greatest contribution to the Hebrew religion consisted in sending out a call to the scattered tribes of Israel to come to the help of those who were being attacked by the Canaanites. Those who were living peacefully in the northern part of the country were asked to come to the "help of the LORD against the mighty." Loyalty to the deity was thus interpreted to mean a willingness on the part of the tribes to come to the aid of their own people whenever an emergency should arise.

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[22] H. T. Fowler, *A History of the Literature of Ancient Israel* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1912), pp. 173-74.

Samuel, who anointed the first kings to rule over the Hebrew people, is called a prophet. While there are no great ideas which we associate with the work of Samuel we do know that his career filled an important place in the life of the nation and he did much in a political way to prepare the ground for his successors. We read of his connection with a school of prophets where individuals were trained for the particular work which belonged to this office. Probably many of the prophets who are known to us by name only were trained in this school or other similar ones.

After the death of Samuel we read of no great prophets until about the middle of the ninth century. At that time Elijah, the Tishbite, a man in whom the prophetic spirit was well exemplified, startled the people of his day by the stirring messages which he delivered to Ahab, the king of Israel. A group of narratives known as the *Elijah stories* have been preserved in the Old Testament and it is from these that we get our information concerning the life and work of this prophet.[23]

Like Moses and many of the other great Hebrew leaders, Elijah was schooled in the desert. Just how much time he had spent there we do not know, but at any rate when he emerged from his solitude he had some very definite ideas concerning the character of Yahweh and his relationship to the people of Israel. His work took place during the reign of King Ahab and was directly concerned with the issue which had developed between Yahweh and Baal. A critical situation had developed in the northern kingdom that seemed to threaten seriously the future of Yahweh worship among the Israelites. Chiefly as a result of the new agricultural life which came with the settlement in Canaan, Yahweh had come to possess in the minds of many Israelites certain characteristics which the Canaanites had attributed to the baal gods. In other words, Yahweh had become for the Hebrews about the same kind of deity that Baal was for the Canaanites.

[23] The Elijah stories are recorded in I Kings 17; 19; 21.

In addition to this situation another condition had developed in Israel which made matters even worse. From the days of King Solomon down to the time of the current ruler, it had been customary for the Israelite kings to bring foreign wives to their court. As a rule the foreign marriages had been contracted for political reasons, but the kings always extended to their new wives the courtesy of being allowed to continue the worship of the gods recognized in their native lands. In this way the worship of foreign deities had become fairly well established in Israel. King Ahab, for example, had married Jezebel, the daughter of the king of Tyre. This meant the introduction of the worship of the Tyrian Baal which in its native land had been attended by many licentious practices hitherto unknown to the Hebrew people. The worship of this god in the land of Israel constituted a rival for Yahweh worship. In time it seemed to be a fair question whether Baal worship or Yahweh worship would survive.

Elijah appeared as the champion of Yahweh worship. He belonged to the group that had remained loyal to the older nomadic conception of Yahweh and, consequently, he looked with disfavor on the customs and practices of those who attributed agricultural powers to him. He was unalterably opposed to the worship of the Tyrian Baal and it was due largely to his influence that the house of Jezebel was finally overthrown. Elijah appeared before King Ahab and boldly announced, in the name of Yahweh, that it would not rain on the land for a period of three years. This was a direct challenge to the Baal gods who were supposed to have power over the forces of fertility and who were thus able to guarantee their followers a good crop at any time. According to the story, the drouth came exactly as Elijah had predicted thus indicating that Yahweh and not Baal was supreme in the land.

Again Elijah challenged the worshipers of Baal to make good their claims with reference to the power of their gods. In the story of the sacrifices which were made on Mount Carmel, the issue between Yahweh and Baal was put to a real test. An agreement was made between Elijah and the prophets of Baal. They were to go up on Mount Carmel and build altars for their respective deities. They were to put sacrifices on each of the two altars but they were not to place any fire there to consume them. Each of the two parties would then call on their particular god to send fire for the sacrifice. The god who answered by sending fire would then be declared to be the only god for Israel. The priests of Baal were given the opportunity to try first. They erected an altar and prayed fervently for Baal to send fire to consume their sacrifice. When no response was received Elijah began to mock them. He told them to pray louder for perhaps Baal was asleep or maybe he had gone on a long journey. So the priests began to wail and shout. They cut themselves with knives and implored their god to come to their aid. But no answer came. Toward the end of the day the Baal priests gave up. It was then Elijah's turn. He built an altar with unhewn stones and placed a sacrifice upon it. To make sure that no fire had been concealed, he ordered that a trench be dug about it and water be poured over the altar until the surrounding trench had been filled. He then called upon Yahweh to send fire and consume the sacrifice. The fire came and not only consumed the sacrifice but it also licked up all of the water in the surrounding trench. Thus the priests of Baal were defeated. Yahweh had triumphed. Henceforth, he alone could be god in Israel. Other deities might exist outside the land of Israel but they could have no jurisdiction or power in this land. Although Elijah's conception of Yahweh, as set forth in this story, is not that of a pure monotheism, it is evident that his work was at least a step in that direction.

Yahweh was for Elijah a god of power but in addition to his power he also possessed certain moral attributes. He was the champion of social justice. He was concerned with the rights of human beings and he would surely punish those who trampled on these rights. This was Elijah's second contribution to the development of the idea of Yahweh. This conception is set forth in the story concerning Naboth's vineyard.

According to this story, King Ahab had desired for some time to obtain possession of a choice piece of land which belonged to Naboth, a private citizen. At first he offered to buy it but Naboth would not sell it to him. The land had been a family possession for a long time and he did not want to sell that which he had inherited from his fathers. The King was disappointed, and when his wife Jezebel learned the cause of his sulky mood, she immediately devised a plan for getting possession of the land. At her insistence, Naboth was condemned on a false charge and stoned to death. His property was then confiscated to the state and thus made available to the King. It was at this point that Elijah appeared on the scene. The conduct of Ahab and Jezebel had aroused his indignation to the greatest possible extent. He could not tolerate such actions. Boldly he denounced this injustice on the part of the ruling house and *in the name of Yahweh* predicted the complete overthrow of Ahab's house. In this way he gave expression to his deep conviction that Yahweh demanded social justice on the part of his people and he would not suffer even a king to wrest property unjustly from one of his private subjects.

Elijah's conception of the moral character of Yahweh is revealed still further in another story which presents the deity as speaking through a *still small voice.* Jezebel had determined to have Elijah put to death and the prophet was fleeing in order to save his life. At last he came to Mount Horeb where, according to ancient traditions, Yahweh had been supposed to dwell. As he approached the mountain there was a strong wind and after the wind an earthquake. After the earthquake there was a fire. We are told that Yahweh was not in the wind, neither was he in the earthquake, nor in the fire. After the fire there was a still small voice and Yahweh was in that voice. The story is significant because it indicates that for Elijah, Yahweh was something more than the embodiment of power without moral purpose which he seems to have been for some of those who lived at an earlier age. The storm and the earthquake and the fire were no longer regarded as manifestations of the divine presence. Yahweh spoke in a different way. He made himself known through the inner voice of conscience.

Chapter 8

THE PROPHECIES OF AMOS AND HOSEA

Amos

It was about the middle of the eighth century B.C. that the oldest book which is included in our present Bible first appeared. It was the little Book of Amos, the shepherd prophet, whose messages were delivered during the prosperous reign of King Jeroboam II of the northern kingdom. It was not a large book. In its present form it contains only nine chapters and there is a strong probability that some of the material contained in these chapters is the work of later writers. However, in spite of minor changes and additions, the major portion of the book has come down to us in approximately the form in which it was first given by the prophet himself.

Although Amos has frequently been classified among the minor prophets of the Old Testament,[1] it is by no means an unimportant book. The distinction between major and minor prophets seems to have been based almost exclusively on the size of the books which they produced. If a prophet wrote a large book he was known as a major prophet and if he wrote a small one he was regarded as a minor prophet. We know very well that the size of a book is not in itself a true index of its worth. Many of the most important documents that have ever been written were short. The Book of Amos belongs in this class. Although it was produced at an early date, the ideas which are set forth in it represent one of the great achievements in Hebrew history. Anyone who is interested in ethical religion or who wishes to understand the problems of social justice at the present time will do well to read and ponder Amos.

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[1] The writings of the so-called "minor prophets" were placed together in the Hebrew canon of scripture and were known as the "book of the twelve" prophets.

Historical Background

Our only source of information concerning the life and personality of Amos is found in the one book which bears his name. He does not say very much directly about himself but the indirect references are sufficient to give us a fairly adequate picture of the man and the conditions under which his messages were given. Amos was a shepherd or herdsman [2] who lived in Tekoa, located on a comparatively barren plateau a few miles west of the city of Jerusalem. It was here that he spent the greater portion of his time earning a livelihood by taking care of sheep and dressing sycamore trees. We would infer from passages in his book that he spent much of the time alone and that he was familiar with the dangers which are peculiar to a wild and sparsely settled country. From his home in Tekoa he would make excursions to the cities of the northern kingdom probably for the purpose of marketing his produce. These trips were an important factor in his life, for they enabled him to see the conditions and manner of living characteristic of different parts of the country. After returning from these trips he would think about what he had seen. The more he thought the more disturbed he became. Finally he began to have dreams and visions which eventually sent him back to these cities as the prophet of Yahweh.

The reign of Jeroboam II was in many respects a peaceful and prosperous one for the kingdom of Israel. The wars which had troubled his predecessors were over and there was no threat to the security of the nation. The land which they had lost in earlier conflicts had been regained and, according to the record which we have in the Book of Kings,[3] the boundaries of the kingdom had been extended both in the north and in the west. Assyria was no longer in a position to make war against them and they had nothing to fear from neighboring countries. At-

[2] Amos 1:1.
[3] II Kings 14:25.

tention had been given to the development of natural resources and the people were more prosperous from a material point of view than they had been before. Jeroboam's reign continued for approximately a half-century. With no thought of danger ahead the leaders of the nation believed these prosperous conditions would continue indefinitely.

In spite of this era of peace and prosperity, Israel was not in a healthy condition. The wealth of the country was distributed unfairly. Some people had much more than they deserved and others were wrongfully deprived of the necessities of life. Society was divided into two classes, the wealthy and the very poor. The rich were growing richer and the lot of the poor was constantly becoming more difficult. Those who had been forced to borrow in order to meet some unfortunate circumstance were often unable to repay their creditors when the loan was due. As a result they would have to give up the remainder of their property. Sometimes, in the more extreme cases, sons or daughters would be sold into slavery in order to satisfy the debt.

As a result of the economic system which caused people to forfeit their property because of debts, most of the land had come into the possession of a relatively small class of people. Those who had been dispossessed were at the mercy of the new owners of the land and were forced to accept whatever these persons might see fit to offer them. The wealthy landowners were able to build homes for themselves in the cities. They could live in ease and luxury [4] enjoying the income derived from the land where tenants and hired servants did the manual labor. By oppressing these workers through exorbitant rents and inadequate wages they could increase their own income. By the time that Amos appeared on the scene the lot of these workers who lived on the land belonging to someone else was pitiful indeed. They had to toil long hours and endure many hardships in order to maintain a bare existence.

This economic system was supported by certain religious and political ideals which were promulgated by the prosperous few. Material gain was interpreted by them to be evidence of divine favor. Yahweh, they believed, prospered those who feared him and who were obedient to his commands. On the other hand he punished with hardship and suffering those who were indifferent to the requirements that he demanded of them. The poor people living on the land were evidently not enjoying the divine favor. The very fact that they were having such a hard time was regarded as proof enough that Yahweh must be displeased with them. It was a comfortable philosophy for those who were prosperous. As they saw it, both the rich and poor were getting exactly what they deserved.

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[4] Amos 6:3-4.

The attitude of many of the priests was in harmony with this interpretation of things. From their point of view Yahweh required the offering of sacrifices, the making of prayers, the payment of vows, and attendance at all of the religious festivals. It was the small wealthy class of people living in the cities who were most faithful in the performance of all these duties. The wealth which they possessed was believed to be the reward the deity had bestowed upon them in exchange for their faithfulness to him. The poor people who were living on the land and who possessed neither property nor security for the future were not so faithful in the observance of these ritualistic requirements. Indeed they had little opportunity to do so since it required practically all of their time and energy to make a bare living. They did not attend the religious convocations and solemn assemblies. They had little if anything to do with the services taking place at the established sanctuaries. From the priestly point of view,[5] they were therefore negligent in the performance of their duties. They were not obeying the divine commands and this was the reason why Yahweh did not bless them with material prosperity. The poverty and misery which they were forced to endure was interpreted to be Yahweh's punishment sent upon them because of their shortcomings.

This religious sanction given to the prevailing economic system was reinforced by the political beliefs associated with it. The Israelites who were directing the affairs of government took a great deal of pride in the accomplishments of their nation.

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[5] Although this point of view is typical of the priests to whom Amos refers, it would be a mistake to say that it characterizes all of the Old Testament priests. Many of them were equal to the prophets in their appreciation of moral qualities.

The land where they dwelt was believed to be Yahweh's land. He had given it to them for an everlasting inheritance and they were confident that no foreign power would ever be able to take it from them. Because Yahweh was on their side there was no need for them to worry about the security of the nation or any other problem pertaining to the future.

It was against this type of economic and religious philosophy that Amos protested. As a shepherd and farmer living on the barren hills of Tekoa, he was familiar with the ordinary lot of poor people. If he had not gone into the cities that were north of his home where he saw luxury and idleness he might not have become a prophet. It was the contrast between the lives of the rich and the poor that made such a deep impression on his mind. As he would take his produce to market he had to pass through the country districts. This would give him an opportunity to observe the manner of living and the hardships which the poor were forced to endure. When he would reach the cities he found people who were living under very different conditions. His description of the people in Samaria "who lie upon beds of ivory, and stretch themselves upon their couches, and eat lambs from the flock" would lead us to think he was shocked by what he saw. It wasn't merely the contrast between the rich and the poor that made him stop and think. It was the explanation of their different lots that caused him to wonder whether the existing state of affairs was as sound as the priests and governmental leaders had supposed it to be. Was it true, he asked himself, that Yahweh really loved the rich people so much? Did he despise the poor and bring hardship upon them merely because they were not faithful in the observance of the ritualistic demands of their religion?

These questions Amos must have pondered as he would go back home and look after his sheep and sycamore trees. He had been taught that Yahweh was different from the baal gods. Their worshipers were interested only in material prosperity. They made prayers and offered incense to Baal in order to get things for themselves. If Yahweh granted riches and security in return for the observance of the ritual, there was no essential difference between him and the baal gods. Could it be that the priests and the political leaders of Israel were mistaken in their conception of Yahweh? Was it not possible that their sense of security was only an illusion? Would conditions continue for a long time as they had been in the past? Questions such as these must have troubled Amos until he was unable to sleep soundly. He began to have dreams about northern Israel and the fate that was in store for her. Some of these dreams have been recorded and we can see they had an important bearing on the messages he was soon to deliver.

In one of these dreams Amos saw a stone wall which was not standing straight.[6] It had a large bulge which indicated it was about to fall. As Amos stood looking at the wall he saw a man measuring it with a plumb-line. The wall, he was told, represented the kingdom of Israel. Just as a crooked wall is bound to collapse so the nation was ready for a fall. The prosperous reign of Jeroboam II was about to come to a close and before long the people would be carried into captivity. This dream evidently made a profound impression on the mind of the prophet. It helped to crystallize his thinking about those conditions which he had observed. It led to the conviction that it was the attitude of people toward the principles of justice which really determine whether they will survive.

In another dream Amos saw a basket of summer fruit.[7] The fruit was ripe and ready to be eaten. He wondered what this dream meant and he was told that the fruit represented the kingdom of Israel. Its ripe, luscious character was a symbol of the peace and contentment which had come with the reign of Jeroboam II. The prosperity of the nation and its sense of security was like the basket of summer fruit. It would endure for a short time only. On the surface of things conditions seemed to be wholesome and secure but this delightful period in the history of the nation was rapidly coming to a close. Underneath, the forces of decay were already at work and it would be only a short time before the nation would cease to exist.

The more Amos thought about these dreams and the meanings which they symbolized, the more he became convinced that

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[6] Amos 7:7-9.
[7] Amos 8:1-3.

Yahweh would not preserve the nation of Israel. He was a god of justice and for that reason he could not support a nation whose policies were contrary to the principles which belonged to his nature. Justice demands that wrongdoing shall be punished. Hence, the captivity of Israel by a foreign power would not mean the overthrow of Yahweh's power but rather the carrying out of his own purpose. As these convictions became clear and strong in Amos' mind he reached the point where he could keep still no longer. He must tell the people the truth about their condition and the future which he saw in store for them.

With this purpose in mind he set out one day to visit the city of Samaria. Having transacted his business, he observed what was going on in the places of worship. As he looked over the crowd that had gathered he could detect an attitude of complacency on the part of those who were confident that Yahweh would protect and prosper the nation so long as they were faithful in the observance of ritualistic requirements. It did not occur to them that anything could be wrong with their manner of living, or that Yahweh was in any way dissatisfied with what they were doing. Amos realized that the time had come for him to speak. He must declare the message which Yahweh had impressed so deeply on his mind. This is what Yahweh told him to say:

> "I hate, I despise your feasts,
> and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies.
> Even though you offer me your burnt offerings and cereal offerings,
> I will not accept them,
> and the peace offerings of your fatted beasts
> I will not look upon.
> Take away from me the noise of your songs;
> to the melody of your harps I will not listen.
> But let justice roll down like waters,
> and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream."
> (Amos 5:21-24)

This was indeed one of the great pronouncements in the history of the Hebrew people. Nothing like it had ever been spoken among them before this time. It marked a turning point in the development of Israel's religious ideals. Just what effect it may have had on the people who heard it we are not told. We do know, however, the reaction of the priest Amaziah.

> Then Amaziah the priest of Bethel sent to Jeroboam king of Israel, saying, "Amos has conspired against you in the midst of the house of Israel; the land is not able to bear all his words. For thus Amos has said,
>
> 'Jeroboam shall die by the sword,
> and Israel must go into exile
> away from his land.'"
>
> And Amaziah said to Amos, "O seer, go, flee away to the land of Judah, and eat bread there, and prophesy there; but never again prophesy at Bethel, for it is the king's sanctuary, and it is a temple of the kingdom." (Amos 7:10-13)

It was in reply to the statement made by Amaziah that Amos declared he was no prophet, neither was he a prophet's son. He meant, of course, that he was not one of the professional prophets whose function it was to cater to the wishes of the people. On the contrary, he was a spokesman for Yahweh and declared only those things which he had been told to say. How long Amos remained in the cities of Israel or the number of speeches he made on different occasions has not been recorded. We may be sure that eventually the opposition of the priests forced him to retire to his home at Tekoa. It was then that his messages were put into writing, which made it possible for them to be preserved for future generations.

Amos' Conception of Yahweh

Justice as the chief attribute of the deity may be said to be one of the cardinal ideas of the prophet Amos. That Yahweh was a just being had not been entirely absent from the work of his predecessors. As far back as the times of Moses it was believed that the requirements of the deity included fair treatment on the part of the Hebrews toward one another. The laws contained in the Book of the Covenant were designed largely for the purpose of making clear the demands of justice with reference to particular problems which would arise within their own borders. The work of Elijah, as we have observed, established a clear connection between Yahweh and the property rights of the individual. The story of Naboth's vineyard set forth the idea that Yahweh was against social injustice. He would surely punish those who would trample on the rights of others.

Amos had probably been familiar with these teachings concerning the nature of Yahweh ever since the days of his childhood. It was not until he had observed the economic and social injustices of his time that the real significance of these ideas became clear to him. If Yahweh was a just god who cared about the rights of the individual he would not reward those who disregarded these rights in order to secure material gain for themselves. He would bring upon the nation exactly what the people deserved and it would not be economic prosperity nor political security. Disintegration and captivity would be more in line with the demands of justice.

In his conception of Yahweh as universal justice Amos went beyond the thinking of any of his predecessors. He saw something like the reign of moral law illustrated in the course of events. He could see that nations do not go to pieces without some cause for their downfall. Whatever would happen to the kingdom of Israel would be the result of the attitude which the people had taken toward those moral principles which were embodied in the very nature of things.

> "Does a lion roar in the forest,
> when he has no prey?
> Does a young lion cry out from his den,
> if he has taken nothing?
> Does a bird fall in a snare on the earth,
> when there is no trap for it?
> Does a snare spring up from the ground,
> when it has taken nothing?
> Is a trumpet blown in a city,
> and the people are not afraid?
> Does evil befall a city,
> unless the Lord has done it?"
> (Amos 3:4-6)

We often say of the physical laws of the universe that they can never be broken. They can only be illustrated. Amos' conception of moral law implies a similar idea.[8] Yahweh's principles of justice were regarded as inexorable. No nation could go contrary to them and escape destruction. Furthermore, these principles have to do with all nations. Prior to the time of Amos, Yahweh had usually been known as the god of the Hebrew people. Other nations had their own deities. Yahweh did not belong to them and he could not be expected to exercise his power in those lands that were outside his jurisdiction. It was Amos who challenged this nationalistic conception of Yahweh and declared that the moral principles associated with his nature are binding upon other peoples as well as those who live in Israel. This idea is set forth in the first two chapters of his book.

> Thus says the LORD:
> "For three transgressions of Damascus,
> and for four, I will not revoke the punishment;
> because they have threshed Gilead
> with threshing sledges of iron."
>
> . . .
>
> Thus says the LORD:
> "For three transgressions of Gaza,
> and for four, I will not revoke the punishment;
> because they carried into exile a whole people
> to deliver them up to Edom."
>
> . . .
>
> Thus says the LORD:
> "For three transgressions of Tyre,
> and for four, I will not revoke the punishment;
> because they delivered up a whole people to Edom,
> and did not remember the covenant of brotherhood."
> (Amos 1:3, 6, 9)

Similarly the prophet spoke against the people of Edom and Moab. They, too, had committed atrocities and Amos declared Yahweh would surely bring punishment upon them. How could

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[8] For a discussion of the prophetic interpretation of history in contrast to the scientific point of view see R. B. Y. Scott, *The Relevance of the Prophets* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1947), chap. vii.

Yahweh bring punishment on Damascus, Gaza, Tyre, Edom, and Moab? He could do this only by virtue of the fact that the principles of justice which are an expression of his nature have to do with all nations. Yahweh is not merely the god of the Hebrews. He is universal in character. He is no respecter of persons or nations. Transgression of moral requirements is bound to be followed by ruin and decay. This was as true for foreign nations as it was for Israel.

Having pointed out the moral transgressions of these peoples and having declared that Yahweh will bring swift judgment upon them, Amos proceeded to bring an indictment against Judah. Because the inhabitants of that nation have rejected the law of Yahweh, and because their lies have caused them to err, "I will send a fire upon Judah, and it shall devour the strongholds of Jerusalem." [9] It is at this point that the prophet reaches a dramatic climax by bringing the message home to the very people who were listening to him.

> Thus says the LORD:
> "For three transgressions of Israel,
> and for four, I will not revoke the punishment;
> because they sell the righteous for silver,
> and the needy for a pair of shoes—
> they that trample the head of the poor into the dust of the earth,
> and turn aside the way of the afflicted;
> a man and his father go in to the same maiden,
> so that my holy name is profaned";
> (Amos 2:6-7)

Because Yahweh's moral laws are universal, the kingdom of Israel will be overthrown and the inhabitants carried into captivity by a foreign power. It is true that during the latter part of the reign of Jeroboam II, the Assyrians were coming into power and there was some reason for thinking their conquests might be extended to include Israel. The rulers of Assyria were evidently bent on establishing a great empire for themselves and the Israelites were not in a position to offer any adequate resistance. Amos, however, did not base his prediction of doom for Israel on any such consideration. He saw only one reason for predicting the captivity of the nation and that was the disregard on the part of her people for the principles of economic and social justice. Their attitude toward moral law had been exemplified in the ruthless manner in which they had exploited the poor. Human rights had been pushed aside whenever they stood in the way of greater profits for those who were in power. Conduct of this type could not go unpunished. As Amos saw it, this is a moral universe in which the demands of justice are bound to be met.

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[9] Amos 2:5.

"Fallen, no more to rise,
    is the virgin Israel;
forsaken on her land,
    with none to raise her up."
        (Amos 5:2)

The Worship of Yahweh

One of the most startling and revolutionary ideas introduced by Amos was that Yahweh cared nothing for sacrifices, religious feasts, sacred music, long prayers in public, or any of the other observances pertaining to the ritual. This was indeed a shocking doctrine for a Hebrew of the eighth century B.C. to proclaim. From the earliest times of which we have any record, the worship of Yahweh was conceived almost entirely in terms of ritualistic observances. It was for this purpose that altars had been erected, sanctuaries built, and a system pertaining to the priesthood had been established. The people as a whole had never been conscious of any other way in which to express their loyalty and devotion to Yahweh. It is no wonder that the priests were upset when Amos declared Yahweh cared for none of these things.

What could have led Amos to such a radical conclusion as this? It was his understanding of the nature of Yahweh. If Yahweh was a moral being whose chief attribute was justice, he would not be interested in having people pay attention to him merely in order to secure greater material benefits for themselves. That which he would desire above all else would be justice and fair treatment on the part of human beings in their relations with one another. The only worship which Yahweh desired was the practice of justice. "Let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream."[10] Yahweh will not protect Israel in exchange for their sacrifices to him. If the people really want security for themselves this is the way to seek it. "Hate evil, and love good, and establish justice in the gate; it may be that the LORD, the God of hosts, will be gracious to the remnant of Joseph."[11]

This conception of the way in which people should express their loyalty to Yahweh did not meet with favor at the hands of the priests nor was it ever popular with the people in general. Ritualistic religion is much easier than the type which demands moral conduct. The wealthy landowners of Bethel and Samaria could carry out all of the requirements of the ritual without any interference with the profits which they were making by selling the refuse of the grain or using false measures in the sale of their goods. For them to worship Yahweh according to the instruction of Amos would cost them all of the dishonest gain they were acquiring. It was far more comfortable for them to condemn Amos and continue with their traditional forms of worship. That was precisely what they did. Note Amos' satire on their piety.

> "Come to Bethel, and transgress;
>   to Gilgal, and multiply transgression;
> bring your sacrifices every morning,
>   your tithes every three days;
> offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving of that which is leavened,
>   and proclaim freewill offerings, publish them;
>   for so you love to do, O people of Israel!"
>   says the Lord GOD.
>   (Amos 4:4-5)

The Day of Yahweh

One of the popular concepts during the times of Amos had to do with the coming of the day of Yahweh. It was a part of the generally accepted belief that some day the divine purpose in history would be realized. It was taken for granted that the realization of this purpose was identical with the establishment of the Israelite people in Canaan. It is true that during the era in which Amos lived the kingdom of Israel had been in existence for a long time. In spite of this they had not, as yet, achieved the peace and security which they believed would eventually be theirs to enjoy. Hence, they projected their ideal into the future. They looked forward to the time when all of their enemies would be suppressed and their own kingdom would be exalted as the leading nation of the world. This, according to the popular view, would be the triumph of Yahweh in the earth.

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[10] Amos 5:24.
[11] Amos 5:15.

It is in the light of this popular conception that we can understand what Amos meant when he said,

> Woe to you who desire the day of the LORD!
> Why would you have the day of the LORD!
> It is darkness, and not light;
>
> . . .
>
> Is not the day of the LORD darkness, and not light,
> and gloom with no brightness in it?
> (Amos 5:18, 20)

Because Yahweh is a god of justice, his triumph in the world will not mean peace and security for those who have been getting more than their just share. It will mean just the opposite. They will have to give up their luxuries and their comfortable positions and suffer the fate of those who are being punished for their wrongdoings. The day of Yahweh meant for Amos something similar to what we have in mind at the present time when we speak about the coming of a "just and durable peace." We use the terms "just" and "durable" together because of our conviction that nothing can, in the long run, be durable unless it is just. In this way we express our faith in the moral character of the universe. A theistic conception of the universe implies that justice belongs to the nature of things and consequently whatever is contrary to its spirit will ultimately fail. We are probably correct in these assumptions. The practical difficulty arises when we identify the triumph of justice in the world with the vindication of all the policies which we as a nation have adopted.

It is a very comfortable thought which permits us to believe the coming of the day of justice in the world will mean security for us and a perpetuation of the particular social and economic order we have established. It is also very pleasant for us to believe the arrival of this day will bring about the collapse of anything on the part of other nations which is not in harmony with our nationalistic ideals. In this respect we are like the contemporaries of Amos who looked forward to the coming of the day of Yahweh, thinking it meant peace and security for their nation.

When Amos declared that the day of Yahweh would be a day of judgment for the people of Israel, he was simply pointing out that the demands of justice have the same meaning in one's own country that they have in any of the foreign nations. A god of justice is no respecter of nations. Whenever national policies include unfair discriminations and the placing of property values ahead of human values, the triumph of justice in the world means darkness and punishment. People who have been getting more than their just share of material things will not be likely to welcome the day of justice for it will mean the very opposite of what they desire.

Privilege and Responsibility

Amos is often referred to as the prophet of doom because he predicted the complete overthrow of the kingdom of Israel. Unlike most of the prophets who succeeded him, Amos did not think of the approaching captivity as an experience which would teach the Israelites how they should live in the future. As he saw it, there would be no glorious future for the nation. Israel had pursued policies which were bound to bring about her own destruction, and from this fate there would be no recovery. At least this is the teaching which is expressed throughout the major portion of the book. It is true that the book in its present form does contain some passages which express hope for a restoration. One of them even goes so far as to describe the material prosperity which will belong to the nation after their return from the coming captivity.[12] Was Amos the author of these passages, or were they inserted by some writer who lived at a later time? The latter alternative seems more probable. There are two reasons why this is true. In the first place, the idea of a restoration is a direct contradiction of other statements found in the book. The second reason is that the restoration described in these passages is not what one would expect from Amos since they tell us nothing about any moral reformation along the lines of social justice but stress the matter of economic prosperity and the ease and comfort which go with it. In the light of what Amos had said previously concerning those who were "at ease in Zion" it is hard to imagine that he would have made predictions of this type.

To what extent were the people of Israel to be blamed for the course which their nation had been following? Were some of them more guilty than others? Amos does not say anything about individual responsibility. None of the prophets of this period go that far in their analysis of the claims of justice. They assume that Yahweh deals directly with the nation as a whole. If the practices which are carried on are contrary to the spirit of justice, the entire population will have to suffer the punishment which follows. If a few individuals should happen to escape the coming captivity, it will be comparable to the ear or hind leg of the sheep which the shepherd is able to rescue from the lion. It will not be sufficient to enable the animal to live again, nor will these individuals be able to organize a new nation.

Why should Yahweh bring captivity upon Israel when the people are unaware of the consequences which follow their manner of living? Why would he destroy them so long as they are sincere in their observance of the ritual? It is with reference to these questions that Amos tells his listeners that responsibility is proportionate to the opportunities given for learning the truth about Yahweh and his relation to his people.

> Hear this word that the LORD has spoken against you, O people of Israel, against the whole family which I brought up out of the land of Egypt:

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[12] Amos 9:13-15

"You only have I known
of all the families of the earth;
therefore I will punish you
for all your iniquities."
(Amos 3:1-2)

The prophets were always interested in history, especially the history of their own people. They believed it was through history that Yahweh revealed much of the truth concerning himself. The Israelites were familiar with the history of their own people. The story of their deliverance from the oppression in Egypt should have been enough to teach them that Yahweh is always on the side of those who follow justice and who refuse to exploit the poor and the unfortunate. This lesson had been illustrated many times in the experiences which followed the conquest of Canaan and the establishment of the monarchy. The fact that the people of Amos' time had not learned the lesson was no reason why they should escape punishment. They had been given the opportunity to learn it. In fact, their opportunities had been much greater than those of the surrounding nations, and, for this reason, a greater responsibility had been placed upon them.

Hosea

It was during the latter part of the reign of Jeroboam II that Hosea received his call to prophesy. This means that the same social, political, economic, and religious conditions which prevailed during the times of Amos are also in the background of the Book of Hosea. There is, however, one important difference that should be noted. Hosea's ministry falls in the period which saw not only the prosperity and apparent security of the reign of Jeroboam, but also the breaking up of that stability and the rapid disintegration of Israel which preceded the downfall of the nation. The political situation which followed the death of Jeroboam reveals the chaos and insecurity which were characteristic of the times. The moral fibre of the nation had been weakened by the greed and exploitation against which Amos had protested, and as a result the strength of their political structure had vanished. One dynasty of kings followed another in rapid succession and Israel was forced to pay tribute to the rising power of Assyria.[13] Jeroboam's son Zechariah reigned six months and was assassinated by Shallum who then became king. The new king reigned only one month when he was killed and succeeded by his assassin who is known to us as King Menahem. Menahem ruled for approximately nine years (745–736 B.C.) but he was able to maintain his position and keep peace in the land only by exacting an enormous tribute from his people and paying it over to the king of Assyria. It was against this policy of paying taxes to appease an Assyrian overlord that the people revolted by assassinating Menahem's son, King Pekahiah. The assassin who is known as Pekah reigned about three years. At the end of this time he was deposed and killed by Hoshea, the last of the Israelite kings before the nation was taken captive by the Assyrians.

No nation can enjoy security when its rulers are changed as rapidly as that. Some of the people had mocked Amos when he predicted the downfall of Israel, but before the close of Hosea's ministry it was obvious to any thinking person that existing conditions could not endure very long. The nation was on the road to ruin but there seemed to be no clear understanding on the part of the people as to why their country was doomed or what steps might be taken to prevent its utter collapse. It was the mission of Hosea to interpret this situation to his people and to point out the moral obligations that were associated with it.

We know nothing of the personality of Hosea except that revealed in the little book that bears his name. From this source we would infer that the prophet, like his predecessor Amos, lived in the hill country perhaps on the edge of the desert. He was critical of those religious ideals and practices which had become associated with the agricultural life of his day.[14] Like the older prophets of the desert he believed Yahweh was more interested in the moral fibre of human beings than he was in the giving of good crops or the promotion of material prosperity. Baal worship was concerned primarily with the satisfaction of selfish interests and Hosea could see many ways in which the influence of these cults was being manifested in the land of Israel. He wanted to call the people back to that type of religious experience in which the worship of Yahweh would be identified with a form of social justice that would recognize the rights of individual human beings.

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[13] For a brief history of this period see Albert E. Bailey and Charles F. Kent, *History of the Hebrew Commonwealth* (New York: Chas. Scribner's Sons, 1920), chap. xvii.

[14] For a discussion of this problem see Rolland Wolfe, *Meet Amos and Hosea* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1945), pp. 73-76. See also John Paterson, *The Goodly Fellowship of the Prophets* (New York: Chas. Scribner's Sons, 1949), pp. 38-42.

Unlike Amos, whose style of writing or speaking was prosaic and factual, Hosea seems to have the soul of a poet. He expresses feelings as well as ideas in all that he has to say. He understands Yahweh's feeling toward Israel because he has experienced similar feelings in the course of his own life. He knows what it means to love those who have wronged him, and it is out of his own inner experience of forgiveness and hope that he arrives at a new and important conception of the deity.

The Book of Hosea as it now stands in our Bible contains materials which the prophet did not write. There is ample evidence of the work of redactors and later editors who found it necessary to add statements reflecting the point of view of the times in which they lived. Fortunately for us we can tell with a fair degree of accuracy the portions which belong to the prophet himself, and it is on the basis of these that we must formulate our ideas concerning his contribution to the development of Israel's ideals.

The Story of the Faithless Wife

The first three chapters of Hosea have to do with the prophet's own marital experiences. We are told that Yahweh commanded Hosea to marry an adulterous woman because the country itself had been unfaithful to Yahweh in giving its allegiance to other gods. The prophet did as he was commanded. He married Gomer, the daughter of Diblaim, who bore him three children. Symbolic names were given to each of the children signifying Yahweh's indignation toward his people. Because Hosea was aware of his wife's adultery and knew that the children whom she bore were not his own, he divorced her and put her away. She continued her association with her paramours and came to be known as a professional prostitute.

At the beginning of Chapter 3 we are told that Yahweh came to Hosea a second time and told him to "Go again, love a woman who is beloved of a paramour and is an adulteress, even as the LORD loves the people of Israel, though they turn to other gods." Again, Hosea did as he was told. He purchased a prostitute, paying for her the price of a slave, which was fifteen shekels of silver and an omer and a half of barley. He then kept her in seclusion for a period of time as a symbol of the days to come when the people of Israel would be carried into captivity and would be without a king, a prince, altar, or sacred pillar.

The fact that these three chapters of Hosea seem to constitute a complete unit and that they differ in both style and content from the remaining chapters, has given rise to many different interpretations of the origin and meaning of these two parts of the book. A series of questions naturally arises in connection with each of the narratives and there is no complete agreement among biblical scholars as to how these should be answered. For example, did Hosea write both parts of the book which we have now or were there different authors for each part? [15] Did Yahweh really command Hosea to marry an adulterous woman or did Hosea marry Gomer in good faith, believing that she was a virtuous and honorable woman? Is the entire story contained in the first three chapters to be regarded as a parable designed to make clear the relation between Yahweh and Israel or should the story be interpreted literally as an actual record of the prophet's own domestic experience? Is the woman referred to when Yahweh spoke to Hosea the second time the same person as the one who was married to Hosea and who bore him children? The varying interpretations which have been made of the Book of Hosea are based largely on the different ways in which these questions have been answered.

The arguments used in support of each position which has been held are too numerous and lengthy to be presented here.

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[15] See in this connection Rolland Wolfe, *op. cit.*, pp. 77-87; see also R. H. Pfeiffer, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1941), pp. 566-73.

The view most generally accepted holds that Hosea was the author of both parts of the book although they may have been written at different times and may have been circulated separately. It also maintains that Hosea was not writing a mere parable but was recording his own unhappy experiences in connection with his marriage to Gomer and her unfaithfulness to him in bearing children that were not his own. The statement that Yahweh told him to marry an adulterous woman does not necessarily imply that Hosea selected a temple prostitute for his wife, or that he married Gomer in full knowledge of the life she was living. It is quite possible that he believed in her purity and innocence at the time of his marriage and did not become aware of her adultery until after the children were born. Having learned some very important lessons from this unfortunate experience, the prophet could look back upon it and interpret the consequences which had followed as a part of the purpose which Yahweh had in mind. This type of interpretation concerning the divine will seems to have been fairly common among Old Testament prophets.

What happened to Gomer after Hosea divorced her? Did Hosea seek her out from among her paramours and purchase her freedom by paying the price of an ordinary slave or was it some other person to whom Yahweh referred when he called Hosea the second time? No positive answer to these questions can be found within the book itself. For a long time Old Testament scholars have taken it for granted that it was one and the same person who married Hosea in the first place and who was later purchased by him from her paramours. Recently this view has been called in question by those who believe it was another woman to whom Hosea was sent. At any rate the lesson of the story remains. Yahweh loves Israel in spite of her unfaithfulness to him. Her sins made it necessary for him to send punishment in the form of captivity for the northern kingdom. Israel will have to abide for many days in a strange land where there will be no opportunity for her to continue false and corrupting forms of worship. In the end Israel will learn her lesson. She will be restored to Yahweh's favor and will be brought back to her own land where a Davidic king will rule once more.

Hosea's Conception of the Deity

In his famous book called *Varieties of Religious Experience* William James describes God as "the eternal and everlasting MORE coterminous with the best which we find in ourselves." The point which he makes in this connection is that man's conception of God begins with an analysis of the elements which are included in his own experience. It is not so much by looking *without* as it is by looking *within* ourselves that we come to a meaningful understanding of the nature of deity. Any normal human being will find when he examines his own experiences that there are some things which he must recognize as finer and better than others. Of some of our activities we normally feel ashamed and there are others which win our approval and deepest respect. James, as an empirical philosopher, believed we should try to account for all phases of our experience including the best as well as the worst. That which is fine and noble in human life must be caused by something. It seemed to him most appropriate to use the term God to designate that which is the source of the noblest and best in human experience. While it is true that human beings can never reach perfection in their thinking about God, it would be possible to say that God is like the best which we know in ourselves only with a goodness more than anything we have experienced.

Regardless of what we may think about the value or validity of James' conception of God, the method which he proposed for our understanding of the divine nature seems to be identical with the one which was used by Hosea. The prophet had loved Gomer in spite of her unfaithfulness to him. Even though she had fallen into depths of degradation, he couldn't forget her nor could he fail to hope for her restoration. As he looked back on this experience at a later time, it must have seemed to him that his attitude toward the unfaithful wife was the finest and noblest experience he had ever known. But if love like this could be present in human beings, it must be that Yahweh possessed similar characteristics. The deity could not be less than the goodness which is found in man. Yahweh must be like the goodness found in human beings. It differs only in the sense that it is greater than man's goodness, and is the source of it.

It is in this conception of Yahweh as a god of love and mercy that we find the greatest contrast in the teachings of Amos and Hosea. Amos was concerned with the social and economic conditions which prevailed in Israel and his meditations on this theme led to a conception of Yahweh in terms of the principles of justice which are binding upon all people and for all time. Hosea, on the other hand, meditated on his own experience and came to the conclusion that love which was the noblest thing in his own life was also the key to an understanding of the true nature of Yahweh. Amos' conception of the deity possessed a breadth which we do not find in Hosea. For Amos, Yahweh was a being whose power and influence extended beyond the boundaries of the Hebrew people. The principles of justice and social righteousness are not peculiar to any one nation. They operate in one part of the world in the same way that they do in every other part of it. It is in this sense that Amos taught the universal character of Yahweh. Hosea does not tell us anything about Yahweh's dealings with foreign nations. He probably thought of the deity in terms that were largely nationalistic. But in his conception of Yahweh's dealings with his own people of Israel, Hosea reached greater heights than any of his predecessors. He taught that Yahweh was a husband and a father to Israel. He loved them in spite of their transgressions and any action which he might take with reference to them would surely be directed toward their own good.

Israel's Punishment

With this conception of Yahweh's nature in mind we can see that for Hosea, Israel's sin was something more than transgression of the requirements of social justice. It was a refusal on the part of the people to respond to the kindness and love which Yahweh had so generously bestowed upon them. It was a sin against love. To express his understanding of Yahweh's attitude toward Israel, Hosea uses a number of figures of speech, most of which are drawn from some analogy pertaining to family relationships. Yahweh has been the husband of Israel. He has been a father to them and he has tried in every way to lift their burdens and make it easy for them.

When Israel was a child, I loved him,
 and out of Egypt I called my son.

. . .

I led them with cords of compassion,
 with bands of love,
and I became to them as one
 who eases the yoke on their jaws,
 and I bent down to them and fed them.
(Hos. 11:1, 4)

In spite of all this Israel has been unfaithful to Yahweh. Her people have gone after other gods. The influence of baal worship can be seen in her religious practices. Her people have not only proved themselves to be ungrateful for what they have received from Yahweh but they have failed to show kindness and mercy in their dealings with one another.

Hear the word of the LORD, O people of Israel;
 for the LORD has a controversy with the inhabitants of the land.
There is no faithfulness or kindness,
 and no knowledge of God in the land;
there is swearing, lying, killing, stealing, and committing adultery;
 they break all bounds and murder follows murder.
(Hos. 4:1-2)

Actions of this type cannot go unpunished. Yahweh's love for his people does not mean he will suffer their misdeeds and do nothing about it. They must be made to see the course which they are following is one that necessarily brings about their own destruction. Hosea is no less certain than Amos that the Israelite people are going to be punished. But unlike Amos he sees a different purpose for which the punishment is to be administered. It is not simply a matter of giving to the people of Israel the amount of suffering which they deserve in order to satisfy the claims of justice. Punishment, as Hosea sees it, is an expression of Yahweh's love. It is given for the same reason that a good and loving parent will punish his child. It is designed to teach the ones who are punished a lesson which they have refused to learn in any other way. Yahweh has tried to save Israel through other means. He has sent his prophets and teachers to warn them concerning the evil of their ways. This method has been ineffectual for they have paid no attention to these messengers. They are a perverse people who are bent on having their own way no matter what consequences are involved. If Yahweh were merely a just god, he would let them go headlong to their own destruction and pay no more attention to them. But Yahweh is a god of love and mercy and he simply cannot stand by and watch Israel's destruction without doing something to save them.

> How can I give you up, O Ephraim!
>   How can I hand you over, O Israel!
> How can I make you like Admah!
>   How can I treat you like Zeboiim!
> My heart recoils within me,
>   my compassion grows warm and tender.
>   (Hos. 11:8)

So Yahweh brings captivity upon his people in order to restore them. His punishment is remedial. Israel will learn from her own experience those lessons which she refused to accept from Yahweh's prophets and teachers. The captivity will mean hardship and privation but there is no other way to bring the people to their senses. It is a kind of last resort which Yahweh uses in order to bring about the ultimate salvation of his own people.

Knowledge of Yahweh

The obligation for clear and correct thinking in the field of religion is one of the most important emphases in the Book of Hosea. The prophet did not place the blame for the downfall of Israel on the fact that her people were insincere in what they were doing. He realized that in the majority of instances the leaders of the nation were doing what they believed to be their duty toward Yahweh. The people were following the leadership of the priests and the priests were, as a rule, following one another. The result was that the whole nation was going toward destruction together. The basic trouble, according to the prophet, was a lack of clear understanding about the nature of Yahweh and his requirements of them.

> My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge;
> because you have rejected knowledge,
> I reject you from being a priest to me.
> And since you have forgotten the law of your God,
> I also will forget your children.
> (Hos. 4:6)

It is true that Hosea had in mind something more than the intellectual requirements that are involved in a knowledge of Yahweh. He meant an understanding of love and mercy which comes about only as one experiences these qualities in his own living. But these experiences are not to be separated from the processes of thinking and Hosea does take his people to task for their failure to think correctly in the matter of their religion. Israel, he tells us, is a "cake not turned." [16] His statement is equivalent to what we mean when we say a person is "half-baked" thus indicating the stupidity which characterizes his actions. Again, he says, "Ephraim is like a dove, silly and without sense." [17] In other words, the people of Israel are like a bird without any brains. The fact that they do not know what they are doing will not save them from destruction. They are morally responsible for their ignorance since they have had ample opportunity to know better but they have not made use of it.

Israel's ignorance is particularly manifest in three specific areas. They do not understand the moral character of Yahweh. They believe their worship of him should consist primarily of ritualistic observances. Finally, they think they can make their nation secure by forming alliances with Egypt and Assyria. The prophet is certain that on each of these points they are mistaken and he is equally sure that tragic consequences of these beliefs are soon to follow.

[16] Hos. 7:8.

[17] Hos. 7:11.

Israel's conception of Yahweh has become corrupt through contact with the agricultural mode of living and close proximity to the baal shrines. Hosea represented the older conception of deity which had been associated with men of the desert. The people were taught that Yahweh is interested in the welfare of human beings rather than the increase of material goods. It was the baal deities that had been associated with the ideas of fertility and their worshipers had always looked to them for abundant crops and the production of large flocks. Some of the Israelite people, while still professing to give their loyalty to Yahweh, had come to think of him in a manner similar to the Canaanite baalim. Others, who were interested primarily in material prosperity for themselves, had turned to the baal gods and participated in the sexual orgies that were a part of the recognized forms of worship. Yahweh worship had lost its earlier meaning for the Israelites and the people were now thinking of it as a means of securing the material possessions which they desired.

This way of thinking about the deity was consistent with the forms of worship which were current with the people of Israel. If Yahweh was a god whose chief function was to bestow material goods upon those who had acquired his favor, it would be natural enough to try to win his favor by means of sacrificial offerings, the observance of religious feasts, and the making of long prayers. This procedure was similar to the way in which the baal worshipers had tried to win the favor of their gods. Hosea sees that the worship of his day and the popular conception of Yahweh went together. If Israel could only know the moral character of Yahweh, it would not be trying to worship him in this manner. It would know that Yahweh desired love, mercy, and justice on the part of his people rather than the burning of incense and the offering of animal sacrifices.

> For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice,
> the knowledge of God, rather than burnt offerings.
> (Hos. 6:6)

This failure on the part of the priests and the people to understand the moral character of Yahweh was responsible for the corrupt and licentious forms of worship which had come to be accepted. Thinking that they could obtain favors for themselves by following the practices of the Canaanites they had made offerings of gold and silver to the baalim, consorted with temple prostitutes, and engaged in all sorts of immoral practices. Hosea pleads with them to recognize that it was Yahweh who really had given them grain, and oil, and wine. If they would only recognize this important fact, they would cease their idolatrous worship and seek to promote justice and kindness in their dealings with one another.

A third way in which the Israelites had displayed their ignorance was in their reliance upon foreign powers to bring about their own security. Hosea was distrustful of the monarchy and he had good reasons for maintaining this attitude. Israel's kings following the death of Jeroboam II were mere puppets who had no ability to cope with the situation which they faced. It was Menahem who ruled for the longest period of time and he was able to keep back the Assyrian army of Tiglath-pileser only by paying to him an enormous tribute of money which he obtained by taxing his own people. It was only natural that the people would resent this system of taxation and try to find some way of making themselves safe without paying it. Some of them wanted to form an alliance with Egypt for this purpose and others believed the thing to do was to accept whatever terms would be necessary to win the support of Assyria. Hosea, as a prophet of Yahweh, saw there was no safety for Israel in either of these courses. Since it was moral corruption that was responsible for Israel's plight, nothing short of moral regeneration would be able to establish her security.

Hosea's Contribution

Although the materials which we have concerning Hosea's life and work are very meager, it would be difficult to overestimate his influence upon succeeding generations. Like the other great prophets of the Old Testament, his teachings were not generally accepted by his contemporaries. Those who heard him did not inaugurate any great reform movement. The nation continued on its course and it was not long until the Assyrians overran the land and the punishment which the prophet had predicted became a reality. Fortunately, the work of Hosea was not lost when Israel went into captivity. Those who escaped by fleeing to Judah took the writings of Hosea with them and thus they were preserved for future generations. A century after the fall of the northern kingdom the spirit of Hosea was expressed again in the writings of Jeremiah. Anyone who is familiar with the New Testament knows that the work of this eighth-century prophet is in the background of much of the material which it contains. The new contributions which Hosea made to the development of Israel's religion may be summarized as follows.

1. A New Conception of the Deity. Hosea's insistence on the moral character of Yahweh was not entirely new, for both Elijah and Amos had emphasized the idea of Yahweh's concern for individual human rights. This conception seems to have prevailed more widely in the preagricultural period of Israel's history. What was new in Hosea's teaching was the conviction that love and mercy belong to the nature of the deity. In a sense one might say that even justice is made subordinate to them. Furthermore, Hosea's discovery of the character of Yahweh as a god of love through an analysis of his own moral experience is one of his greatest contributions to religious thought.

2. A New Interpretation of Suffering. That social and political calamity is a consequence of wrongdoing was a principle recognized by all the Hebrew prophets. Hosea's unique contribution is to be found in the purpose for which punishment is given. As he sees it, the disasters which are overtaking the land are an expression of Yahweh's love for his people. It is the method which he employs to bring them back to the course from which they have strayed. If he could only rescue them in some other way he would be glad to do it. Hosea believes Yahweh suffers through all of the painful experiences which he brings upon Israel. It is his hope that through this suffering the people will come to their senses and make the reformation that is needed.

3. Knowledge of God. A knowledge of God and a clear understanding of the nature of God's requirements are essential elements of religious experience. Hosea recognizes that the sins of his people are to a large extent the result of their ignorance. They do not know Yahweh, but they have had an opportunity to do so. The history of Israel from its earliest beginnings has been a revelation of the divine nature. Yahweh's love has been manifested in so many ways there is no excuse for thinking of him in terms that have been borrowed from the worship of the baal gods. Loyalty to Yahweh demands, first of all, clear thinking about the divine nature. Here the major responsibility fell on the priests since they were the ones whose duty it was to interpret Yahweh's requirements to the people. But the people themselves could not be excused for following their leaders blindly. Hosea believed everyone must think for himself in matters of religion and his greatest responsibility is to think correctly.

4. Security for a Nation. This is based on the moral quality of living exemplified in the lives of its people. In Hosea's time, as in succeeding generations, nations have tried to make themselves secure through power alone. They have relied upon armies and other expressions of military might. Small nations have sought security in forming an alliance with a more powerful nation. The leaders of Israel in Hosea's time were divided between those who wanted an alliance with Assyria and those who wanted an alliance with Egypt. The prophet was equally opposed to both of these plans because he knew the cause of Israel's downfall was not to be found in her lack of military strength. It was moral degeneracy that had weakened Israel and brought about the chaotic conditions which prevailed. Nothing less than moral regeneration would ever make her strong again.

Chapter 9

ISAIAH, THE SON OF AMOZ

While Hosea was still preaching in the north and the Israelite nation was hastening toward its downfall, there arose in the city of Jerusalem, the capital of the southern kingdom, the most majestic of all Israel's prophets, Isaiah the son of Amoz. An aristocrat by birth, he spent most of his life in and around the city of Jerusalem taking an active interest in the affairs of government and trying to interpret to his people the significance of events that were taking place. His public ministry lasted over a period of more than forty years during which time the kingdom of Judah went through one crisis after another, but through it all the prophet's hope was strong and he never waivered in his conviction that Yahweh's purpose would ultimately be realized through the activities of his own people.

The Book of Isaiah as we find it in the Old Testament is a collection of separate writings or little books that have been brought together without reference to authorship or chronological order. Only a very few of the most conservative scholars would maintain that the Isaiah, who prophesied during the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, was the author of all the sixty-six chapters which are now included in the Book of Isaiah. Chapters 40 to 66 have every indication of having been written during the Babylonian exile or later, and this was at least one hundred and fifty years after the death of Isaiah. It is of course not impossible that this prophet could have received visions of what would happen during the centuries that would follow his death. The argument about the existence of a Second or Deutero-Isaiah is not based on the idea of the impossibility of God foretelling the future. Rather, it is based on the evidence which appears concerning the time when specific oracles or addresses were actually delivered.

Excluding these chapters which were written in Exilic or post-Exilic times, we have only Chapters 1 to 39 that might be attributed to Isaiah. Even among these chapters there is evidence of the work of editors and redactors who lived after the time of the prophet and who made additions to the writings that had come into their hands. It is generally agreed among Old Testament scholars that Chapters 13:1-14; 23, 24-27, 34-35, and 36-39 are to be included in these later additions. Some critics would add several more passages to these. We can, however, be fairly certain that the most of the materials in Chapters 1 to 39, with the exception of the passages just mentioned, have come from the prophet himself and it is on the basis of their contents that we must formulate our own opinions concerning his life and work.[1]

The Historical Background

Because so much of Isaiah's work was directly concerned with the political and social problems of his day, it is necessary to take into account a brief survey of the history of Judah during the time when his messages were first delivered.[2] Isaiah is the first great prophet of the southern kingdom, or Judah. The early part of his ministry has to do with the period which witnessed the collapse of the northern kingdom. His work with the people of Judah continued until sometime after the threat of Assyrian invasion of the city of Jerusalem in 701 B.C. Isaiah was born sometime between the years 770 and 760 B.C. He was about fifteen years younger than Amos. A contemporary of Hosea, he was able to continue his ministry for a long time after these two prophets of Israel had ceased their activities.

We are told in Chapter 6 of Isaiah that it was in the year that King Uzziah died that the prophet received his call to minister to the people of Judah. King Uzziah died in the year 740 B.C. and we may infer that Isaiah was a young man in his twenties at that time. The event made a profound impression on the mind of the young prophet. Uzziah had been a great king and no one knew better than Isaiah the nature of the loss which Judah sustained in his death. Uzziah's reign had been a prosperous one for the southern kingdom. Edom had been conquered and through the exploitation of her copper mines wealth had flown into the Hebrew kingdom. The successful reign of Jeroboam II in northern Israel had been favorable to the commercial developments in Judah, and Uzziah had increased the productivity of his land by a system of irrigation which helped in the development of natural resources. Then, too, conditions in other countries, particularly Egypt and Assyria, had been favorable to the Hebrew people. Assyria had for some time been ruled by incompetent kings, and the rulers in Egypt had been so disturbed by internal dissensions that they were no longer a threat to the security of Judah. To all these favorable conditions there must be added the aggressive and capable leadership of Uzziah himself. He seems to have enjoyed the confidence and respect of his people to such an extent that when serious problems did arise during the latter part of his reign, his subjects were certain he would know how to cope with them.

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[1] For a full discussion of this problem see R. H. Pfeiffer, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1941), Part IV, chap. i.

[2] For a more complete account of the historical background of Isaiah see Albert E. Bailey and Charles F. Kent, *History of the Hebrew Commonwealth* (New York: Chas. Scribner's Sons, 1920), chaps. xviii-xix. See also E. W. K. Mould, *Essentials of Bible History* (New York: The Ronald Press Co., 1950), chaps. xiv-xv.

The material prosperity which had come to Judah made Uzziah's reign comparable in many respects to that of Jeroboam II in Israel. There was, however, one important difference. The kings in the south were all direct descendants of King David. The Davidic Dynasty had not been broken and there was a firm belief on the part of the people that this condition would always remain. Furthermore, the king was regarded as a kind of divine representative on earth. Prosperity was considered to be evidence of divine favor and it did not seem reasonable to think any major calamity could ever overtake the nation. The rapid change of dynasties in the north which followed the death of Jeroboam would indicate that Yahweh had little to do with the setting up of their kings but this condition was not present in Judah.

The increase of material prosperity which came with the reign of Uzziah was not without its problems, some of which proved to be of a serious nature. One of the most important of these problems had to do with the uneven and unfair distribution of wealth. Wealthy landowners, those who "join house to house, who add field to field," [3] did so at the expense of the poor people who, in order to maintain an existence for themselves, were forced to accept whatever terms the rich people would see fit to impose upon them. We would probably not be missing it very far if we said the same conditions of exploitation and economic injustice against which Amos had prophesied in the north were now becoming characteristic of the south. So long as the contrast between rich and poor is not too great and there remains a substantial middle class, the security of a country is not in grave danger. If, however, the middle class tends to disappear, and the proportion of poor people becomes very large, there will be a tendency for the exploited classes to revolt against the existing order of things. This condition had evidently become a reality before the close of Uzziah's reign.

The developments in the economic sphere did not constitute the only danger which the people of Judah faced during the closing years of Uzziah's leadership. Assyria had risen to the place where she was no longer the weak and inactive power she had been at an earlier date. Under Tiglath-pileser III she was fast becoming the strongest empire in the world. Little kingdoms that were in the path of this growing military power were either being conquered or forced to pay tribute. Northern Israel had been threatened and those who were alert to the situation in the south could see that a similar danger was in store for them. These two threats, revolt from within and invasion from without, were both present during the latter years of Uzziah's reign. The majority of the people were not too deeply concerned about them, for they were confident that no matter what situations might arise Uzziah would know how to meet them.

Then suddenly there came the news that Uzziah was smitten with leprosy.[4] This dread disease was not only regarded as incurable but it was interpreted to mean that Yahweh was displeased with the person who was afflicted and had sent this form of punishment upon him. With the coming of this disease, Uzziah had to leave the palace and live with the colony of lepers outside the city of Jerusalem. If he could have placed a strong and capable son on the throne to rule in his place, the situation would not have been so bad. As it was, Uzziah's son Jotham proved to be a weak and incompetent ruler. He was far more concerned about personal advantages for himself than he was about the interests or security of the people over whom he ruled. As a result of this policy he did not have the confidence or respect of those who had been loyal to his father. During the three years that Uzziah lived in the leper camp he was able to keep in touch with government affairs at Jerusalem and the people still looked to him for counsel and advice. One day the news came that Uzziah was dead. The whole nation must have been shocked, but it was the youthful Isaiah who, more than anyone else, seemed to understand the full significance of the tragedy. In an hour of desperation he went to the temple and while meditating on the fate of his country he became conscious of his call to the work of a prophet.[5]

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[3] Isa. 5:8.

[4] II Chron. 26:19-21.

Jotham's reign was comparatively short. He was succeeded by his son Ahaz. In the meantime events had been taking place that were destined to have an important bearing on the future of Judah. The Assyrian power under Tiglath-pileser III had conquered Syria, subdued Rezin of Damascus, and forced the Israelite king, Menahem, to buy peace by paying a large tribute. The Assyrian conquest might have been extended still further at the time had their armies not become occupied with campaigns in Media and Armenia. It was during this interval that Rezin of Damascus tried to form a coalition of neighboring states for the purpose of throwing off the Assyrian yoke. Pekah, the king of Israel who had assassinated Menahem's son, joined the alliance with Rezin and together they made demands on Jotham the king of Judah to join them. After Jotham's death the demand was renewed upon King Ahaz. The Judean king refused their demands and they threatened to make war on him. Ahaz seems to have been frightened by their threats and he decided to appeal

[5] The story of Isaiah's call is recorded in Isa. 6.

to the Assyrian Tiglath-pileser to come to his aid.[6] Isaiah saw clearly the disastrous consequences that would follow a policy of this kind. He did everything in his power to prevent Ahaz from carrying it out. His counsel was not followed. The king did not have sufficient faith to trust Yahweh for his protection. It looked to him as though help from Assyria would be far more dependable. He asked aid from this source and in time the Assyrians did strike a fatal blow against Ahaz' enemies. But the help did not come to Judah until after they had suffered a severe blow at the hand of those who were offended because of Ahaz' refusal to join them. In 722 Samaria fell after a siege which lasted two years. Ahaz was indebted to the Assyrians for the help they had given him and he was soon made to realize that alliance with this power was purchased at a tremendous cost. Judah was forced to pay tribute to an Assyrian overlord, and even the treasures of the temple were scarcely enough to appease the ambitions of this rising power.

Four years after the fall of Samaria, Ahaz was succeeded by his son Hezekiah. The new king was anxious to throw off the Assyrian yoke and win complete independence for his people. When a revolt against Assyria broke out among the Philistine cities, Hezekiah joined them. The revolt was put down and Hezekiah was made to suffer along with the others who were fighting with him. After the death of Sargon, one of the most powerful leaders of the Assyrians, Hezekiah joined another alliance to accomplish the same purpose which had failed before. This time the revolt was launched by the Babylonian patriot who is known to us as Merodach-baladan.[7] He came to Jerusalem and secured the aid of Hezekiah and then strengthened his cause still further by forming an alliance with Egypt. Isaiah protested against this alliance the same as he had done before, and once more the king proceeded contrary to his advice.

It was not long before the disaster against which the prophet had warned took place. Sargon's successor, Sennacherib, crushed the Babylonian rebels in 703 B.C. He was then able to turn his attention to those countries which had supported the revolt. The kingdom of Judah was invaded, and forty-six fortified cities were captured. Jerusalem and a small area of adjacent territory were all that was left. It looked as though the Judean capital would fall at any time. The Assyrian general with his army encamped at Lachish only thirty-five miles from Jerusalem, sent an officer into the city to demand its surrender.[8] Hezekiah was frightened and did not know what to do. In desperation he turned to the prophet for advice. Isaiah told him to hold firm for Jerusalem was Zion's city and it would not be overthrown. At last Hezekiah heeded the counsel given him by Isaiah. He refused to surrender and in a short time the Assyrian army withdrew. It was an hour of triumph for Isaiah. His prediction that the city would stand had been fulfilled. For a brief period of time Hezekiah tried to organize affairs in accordance with the policies which the prophet had urged him to follow. Then Hezekiah died and was succeeded by his son Manasseh. The new king fell under the influence of those who were opposed to Isaiah and the prophetic reformation which he had inaugurated. The result was a general persecution of the prophets and their followers. Tradition tells us that during the reign of Manasseh, Isaiah was put to death by being sawn asunder.[9]

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[6] See Isa. 7:1-9.

[7] Isa. 39.

Isaiah's Opening Vision

It was the function of Isaiah, as well as that of the other great prophets, to proclaim what they understood to be the message of Yahweh concerning those problems which had to do with the life of the nation. For this reason the prophet's conception of Yahweh is in the background of all that he said and wrote. It appears, first of all, in the account of the opening vision during which Isaiah received his call to the work of a prophet. The record of this vision is found in Chapter 6 which may be regarded as the appropriate introduction to the writings of the prophet. It is an important account not only because it gives us something of the content of Isaiah's conception of

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[8] Isa. 36, 37.

[9] The account of Isaiah's death is recorded in *The Martyrdom of Isaiah,* one of the books included in the *Pseudepigrapha* of the Old Testament. See Chapter 20.

Yahweh, but because it reveals the manner in which he received it. The prophets never tried to prove the existence of God. Neither did their reflections begin with an analysis of objects which are found in the outside world. Their starting point was always to be found in the depths of their own inner experience. Their insight into Yahweh and his relation to the Hebrew people came about through an intuitive process. This does not mean that the role of the prophet was merely a passive one. To be sure, he believed that Yahweh spoke directly to him, but an experience of this kind could not come about until the prophet had done something himself. He must first of all become aware of those problems that were of crucial importance for the people and he must meditate concerning them. It was not until the prophet had brooded for some time over the unsolved problems, that Yahweh would be able to bring the right ideas into his mind and enable him to recognize them. Even then, the prophetic consciousness was not infallible, but it did mean growth and new understanding on the part of the prophet and it made possible the progress which was achieved in the development of his religious ideals.

It was in the year that King Uzziah died that Isaiah received his call.[10] Just how long it was after the king's death we are not told. It may be that the call came immediately after the funeral services had been held, or it is possible that some time had elapsed during which the contrast between Uzziah's able leadership and the weak policies of his son Jotham had become evident. At any rate, Isaiah was aware of the crisis which his country faced and he had probably given more serious thought to it than any other person among his contemporaries. In a reflective mood he went into the temple and became absorbed in reverie. It is not likely that the priests ministering in the temple saw anything unusual about this young man who appeared to be oblivious to his surroundings while he was engaged in serious thought and quiet meditation. But to Isaiah this experience was full of meaning. At a time when everything looked dark insofar as the future of Judah was concerned, Isaiah saw a great light. When the course of events would make it appear as though Yahweh had forsaken his people or even that he did not exist at all, Isaiah became conscious of the reality of his presence and knew that his glory filled the entire earth. He heard a voice saying, "Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts."[11] Because Yahweh was present in all the earth there was hope for the people of Judah.

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[10] Isa. 6:1.

The idea of holiness is one of the dominant elements in Isaiah's conception of the deity. He frequently refers to Yahweh as "the holy one of Israel." This idea of holiness stands in sharp contrast with the sinful nature of man. The term itself, as used by Isaiah, does not refer to some magical quality which is present in things. This concept of holiness is found in some parts of the Old Testament. For example, writers who belonged to the earlier period of Hebrew history had conceived of the ark as a holy object which no one except the priests was allowed to touch. An age later than that of Isaiah carried to an extreme a similar distinction between objects which were holy and those that were unholy. But for Isaiah holiness had reference to moral qualities. It resembled in many respects the use which we attach to the word "wholesomeness." Amos had talked about the justice of Yahweh, and Hosea had emphasized his qualities of mercy and kindness. Both of these ideas are included in Isaiah's concept of holiness and, in addition, he thinks of these divine qualities not only with respect to the Hebrew people but as having to do with the other nations of the world as well.

A holy and righteous god who has to do with all nations of the world was a concept of profound significance for the prophet. It meant that punishment for wrongdoing was a necessity, but it also meant that punishment for sins was only a means toward the realization of a divine purpose in the world. Nations cannot go contrary to divine principles and survive, but there is hope for them if they will only bring their ways into harmony with the ideals of Yahweh. How can this purpose be accomplished? Isaiah realizes that someone must speak for Yahweh and make clear to the people of Judah and Jerusalem the nature of his requirements. As Isaiah thinks of this task and all the responsi-

[11] Isa. 6:3.

bilities that go along with it, he realizes his own unfitness for doing the work. In a spirit of humility he cries out, "Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips." [12] At this point in the vision, one of the seraphim flew to him with a live coal from the altar, touched his lips, and thereby cleansed him from his iniquity and pardoned his sins. Then the prophet offered his services saying, "Here I am! Send me."

This description contains all of the elements of a genuine mystical experience. Some writers have used the term "numinous" to indicate the character of the prophet's experience.[13] Numinous refers to that consciousness in which an individual feels himself in the presence of a great and supreme power. In this presence he becomes aware of his unworthiness. He feels small and utterly insignificant. This attitude is something the individual cannot overcome merely by his own effort. Only action on the part of the divine being can cleanse the heart and purify the mind thus preparing the individual to perform an important mission for God.

Anyone who reads the account of Isaiah's opening vision can see that it contains all these elements. The prophet feels that he is in the majestic presence of Yahweh. His statement about the unclean lips refers not only to actual words he is inclined to speak but to the motives and desires which lie back of them. It is not through his own effort alone that this condition is changed. Yahweh is the one who can bring about purification of the prophet. The live coal from the altar is a symbol of the fire which cleanses and purifies the human heart. After this experience the prophet goes out to speak for Yahweh. He knows that his task will not be an easy one. The people will not give heed to what he has to say. Nevertheless, he will continue to speak the truth to them. Towns and cities will be destroyed and whole nations will come close to ruin, but a remnant will be saved and through this remnant the divine purpose will be realized.

Unlike the remnant of Amos, Isaiah has in mind the nucleus of a restored state, around which renewed activity will revolve.

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[12] Isa. 6:5.

[13] See in this connection Rudolph Otto, *The Idea of the Holy* (London: Oxford University Press, H. Milford, 1936).

The Ethical Nature of Yahweh

Isaiah's conception of Yahweh's holiness made him especially sensitive to the moral laxity that he observed among the people where he lived. Wickedness of any kind could not survive in a world that was governed by a righteous god. With all the vigor and courage which were characteristic of Amos, Isaiah denounced the various forms of injustice which had become a part of the life of his country. The economic situation prompted him to speak in no uncertain terms.

> The LORD enters into judgment
> with the elders and princes of his people:
> "It is you who have devoured the vineyard,
> the spoil of the poor is in your houses.
> What do you mean by crushing my people,
> by grinding the face of the poor?" says the Lord GOD
> of hosts.
>
> (Isa. 3:14-15)

In a passage which reminds one of the message given by Amos about the rich people of Samaria who spent their time in luxury and idleness,[14] Isaiah reproved the wealthy women of Jerusalem who decked themselves in jewelry and costly raiment but had no concern for the people whom they robbed in order to make these luxuries possible for themselves. Like Amos he predicted a day of reckoning in which their wealth and security would be destroyed by an invading army.

One of the early prophecies of Isaiah was put into verse form in order that it might be sung by the prophet. It is recorded in Chapter 5 of his book. The subject of the song is the vineyard which belonged to a beloved friend. The owner of the vineyard gave it the very best of care. He planted the very choicest of vines and built a tower and a wine-press. He surrounded it with a hedge and left nothing undone which might increase its productiveness. He expected to obtain from the vineyard an excellent crop of grapes, but when it came time for the harvest it yielded only wild grapes. After singing about the vineyard

[14] Isa. 3:16-25.

until an eager crowd had gathered, the prophet went on to interpret the meaning of his song. The owner of the vineyard, he told them, was Yahweh and the vineyard itself was none other than the house of Israel and the house of Judah. These two nations had received the tenderest care that could have been bestowed upon them. Yahweh had every right to expect of them justice and fair dealing, but, alas, he had found among them the very opposite.

> Woe to those who join house to house,
>   who add field to field,
> until there is no more room,
>   and you are made to dwell alone
>   in the midst of the land.
>
> . . .
>
> who acquit the guilty for a bribe,
>   and deprive the innocent of his right!
>   (Isa. 5:8, 23)

In the spirit and language of Hosea, Isaiah tells his countrymen that failure to understand the moral nature of Yahweh will not save them from destruction. "My people go into exile for want of knowledge." "The ox knows its owner, and the ass its master's crib; but Israel does not know, my people does not understand" (Isaiah 1:3). If the people only knew the moral nature of Yahweh they would not try to win his favor by offering sacrifices and the performance of ritual. In a notable passage which may be regarded as one of the great classics of Old Testament literature, the prophet sets forth the uselessness of religious practices which do not make for moral conduct.

> "What to me is the multitude of your sacrifices?
>   says the Lord;
> I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams
>   and the fat of fed beasts;
> I do not delight in the blood of bulls,
>   or of lambs, or of he-goats.
>
> "When you come to appear before me,
>   who requires of you
>   this trampling of my courts?

Bring no more vain offerings;
  incense is an abomination to me.
New moon and sabbath and the calling of assemblies—
  I cannot endure iniquity and solemn assembly.
Your new moons and appointed feasts
  my soul hates;
they have become a burden to me,
  I am weary of bearing them.
When you spread forth your hands,
  I will hide my eyes from you;
even though you make many prayers,
  I will not listen;
  your hands are full of blood.
Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean;
  remove the evil of your doings
  from before my eyes;
cease to do evil,
  learn to do good;
seek justice,
  correct oppression;
defend the fatherless,
  plead for the widow."
(Isa. 1:11-17)

Because of the ethical character of Yahweh, the misdeeds of the nation will have to be punished. The invasion of Judah by a foreign power will not mean that pagan gods are superior to Yahweh. Isaiah knows that Yahweh is supreme in all the earth. He it is who uses the foreign powers to chastise his own people. Because the triumph of Yahweh is also the triumph of justice, the coming of the day of Yahweh will be a time of terror and tribulation for those who have done wickedly.

For the Lord of hosts has a day
  against all that is proud and lofty,
  against all that is lifted up and high;

. . .

And the haughtiness of man shall be humbled,
  and the pride of men shall be brought low;
  and the Lord alone will be exalted in that day.

. . .

And men shall enter the caves of the rocks
and the holes of the ground,
from before the terror of the LORD,
and from the glory of his majesty,
when he rises to terrify the earth.
(Isa. 2:12, 17, 19)

No prophet ever saw the terrible consequences of going contrary to Yahweh's requirements more clearly than did Isaiah. The coming of the day of Yahweh will bring anguish and destruction to those who have acted unrighteously. This pronouncement of doom reminds one of what Amos had said about the coming of the day of Yahweh. But with Isaiah something is added to what the former prophet had proclaimed. Quite in the spirit of Hosea, Isaiah tells his people that Yahweh still offers a chance for repentance. Four times the statement is made, "For all this his anger is not turned away and his hand is stretched out still." [15] The punishment of the wicked is not the ultimate purpose of Yahweh. Judah will not be totally destroyed. A remnant will be saved and out of this remnant Yahweh will finally establish his kingdom on this earth.

Once more the ethical character of Isaiah's conception of Yahweh can be seen in the advice which the prophet gives to the king with respect to foreign alliances. During the early part of Isaiah's ministry the kings of Syria and Israel made war upon King Ahaz because of his refusal to join them in an alliance against Assyria. It was a critical situation for Judah, and the frightened Ahaz was ready to appeal to the Assyrians for aid. Isaiah was confident that no permanent help could come to Judah from that source. Taking his son whom he had named Shear-jashub (meaning a remnant shall return) with him, Isaiah met the king "at the end of the conduit of the upper pool" [16] where he had gone to inspect the water supply of the city in preparation for the impending siege.

Declaring that the two rulers whom Ahaz feared were nothing more than "two smoldering stumps of firebrands," Isaiah told the king to give up his plan for obtaining aid from Assyria and to place his trust in Yahweh. Ahaz did not yield to this request but indicated he would carry out the plan he had started. At this point Isaiah challenged him to ask for a sign which would be evidence to him of the truth of the message which the prophet had proclaimed. When Ahaz refused to ask for a sign, Isaiah told him that one would be given to him anyway. The sign would be as follows. A young woman of marriageable age would bear a son and his name would be called Immanuel which means "Yahweh is with us." The child with this name would symbolize the faith which would prevail that Yahweh was still the hope of his people. Before this child would be old enough "to refuse the evil and choose the good" the two kings whom Ahaz feared would suffer a crushing defeat.[17]

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[15] Isa. 5:25.
[16] Isa. 7:3.

One of the most important things about this prediction was the time element which it contained. Isaiah was saying to King Ahaz that the collapse of those two little kingdoms making war against him would come about within so short a time as the next three or four years. If Ahaz' faith in Yahweh could only hold out for that length of time the impending crisis would be over and Judah would have nothing to fear. Unfortunately, the king was not convinced. He went ahead with his plans for Assyrian aid. It was late in coming and when at last it did arrive, Ahaz found that its cost was none other than subservience to the Assyrian power.

During a later period of Isaiah's ministry another crisis of a similar nature arose. Hezekiah, the king of Judah, had been persuaded to join a group of neighboring states in a coalition against Assyria. A Babylonian patriot had sent emissaries to Jerusalem to secure the aid of the Jews. Later an effort was made to get help from Egypt by inviting them to also join the alliance. Isaiah was alarmed at the policy which was being followed for he considered it only another attempt to gain security for the Jewish state by relying on military power instead of trusting in Yahweh. He knew the plan would not be successful and he protested against it with all the power at his command.

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[17] Isa. 7:14-16.

"Woe to the rebellious children," says the Lord,
"who carry out a plan, but not mine;
and who make a league, but not of my spirit,
that they may add sin to sin;
who set out to go down to Egypt,
without asking for my counsel,
to take refuge in the protection of Pharaoh,
and to seek shelter in the shadow of Egypt!
Therefore shall the protection of Pharaoh turn to your shame,
and the shelter in the shadow of Egypt to your humiliation."
(Isa. 30:1-3)

Isaiah was confident that Egypt, even with the aid of neighboring states, would be no match for the Assyrians. Although they were totally unaware of it, the Assyrians were being used as instruments for the carrying out of the punishment which Judah's violation of moral principles demanded. There was no use in the nations trying to resist the purposes of Yahweh.

Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help
and rely on horses,
who trust in chariots because they are many
and in horsemen because they are very strong,
but do not look to the Holy One of Israel
or consult the Lord!
And yet he is wise and brings disaster,
he does not call back his words,
but will arise against the house of the evildoers,
and against the helpers of those who work iniquity.
The Egyptians are men, and not God;
and their horses are flesh, and not spirit.
When the Lord stretches out his hand,
the helper will stumble, and he who is helped will fall,
and they will all perish together.
(Isa. 31:1-3)

Because he knew Yahweh was a righteous god whose principles of justice are involved in the affairs of all nations, Isaiah was sure that only one course of action could make a country safe and that was to bring the policies of government into harmony with the requirements of justice and social righteousness. But

Hezekiah did not seem to understand this at all. He was distressed because it was apparent to him that the security of Judah was about to be lost completely. He entered the coalition against Assyria because he didn't know anything else to do. Isaiah kept insisting that he was following the wrong course. If he really wanted to make Judah safe he should rely upon Yahweh.

> For thus said the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel,
> "In returning and rest you shall be saved;
> in quietness and in trust shall be your strength."
> And you would not,
> (Isa. 30:15)

In spite of the prophet's counsel, Hezekiah went ahead with his plans. Egypt joined the alliance and was one of the first to go down before the onslaught of the Assyrians. This made the position of Judah much worse than it had been before. Within a short time her country was invaded with disastrous results. Many of her cities were conquered and finally the capital city at Jerusalem was placed under siege. Thus the prophet's warnings were literally fulfilled.

The Doctrine of the Remnant

Isaiah was a prophet of hope. He knew that the immediate future for his people was indeed dark, but beyond her punishment there was a ray of hope and this hope grew brighter as the actual political situation became worse. Isaiah was familiar with the history of his people and he did not question their long-established tradition concerning Yahweh's ultimate purpose in the world and the role which the Hebrew people were destined to play in its final realization. His faith in Yahweh would not permit him to believe the Jewish nation would ever be completely destroyed. Many of them, even the majority, might perish but at least a remnant would survive.

This belief in a triumphant remnant finds expression in many parts of Isaiah's writings. We find it first of all in the account of his opening vision. After the prophet had responded to his call and offered his services, Yahweh gave him a message that was filled with irony.

"Make the heart of this people fat,
and their ears heavy,
and shut their eyes;
lest they see with their eyes,
and hear with their ears,
and understand with their hearts,
and turn and be healed."
(Isa. 6:10)

The possibility of repentance was always in the mind of the prophet. There are some scholars who believe this suggestion, that at least some of the people would turn about and be saved, is really an addition that was made by a later writer. Others hold that Isaiah was writing from the perspective of the late years of his ministry and that he interpreted the events which had actually taken place as belonging to the purposes of Yahweh. One of the reasons for thinking that Isaiah, even during the earlier portion of his ministry, did have faith in the salvation of a remnant, is the fact that he gave to his little son a symbolic name which meant "a remnant shall return." It is hard to see how he would have done this if he had believed the destruction of Judah would be complete. It is quite evident that the prophet never expected a sweeping reformation on the part of the people as a whole. Their entire manner of living was too far removed from the ways of Yahweh. His preaching would serve only to aggravate their already rebellious mood. Still, the divine purpose in the world could never be permanently defeated. A small minority would learn the lesson Yahweh was trying to teach them and it was this small group that would really constitute the hope of the world.

The crisis, which took place in 722 B.C. when Samaria fell, must have been a test of the prophet's faith, for he could not observe any marked change for the better on the part of his own people. A more severe test came in 701 B.C. when the Assyrian invasion threatened to destroy even the city of Jerusalem. But at that time Isaiah's faith held firm. He was more sure than ever that a remnant would be saved and he boldly proclaimed that Jerusalem would stand because it was Zion's city.

> In that day the remnant of Israel and the survivors of the house of Jacob will no more lean upon him that smote them, but will lean upon the LORD, the Holy One of Israel, in truth. A remnant will return, the remnant of Jacob, to the mighty God. For though your people Israel be as the sand of the sea, only a remnant of them will return. Destruction is decreed, overflowing with righteousness. For the Lord, the LORD of hosts, will make a full end, as decreed, in the midst of all the earth. (Isa. 10:20-23)

As one after another of the cities of Judah fell into the hands of the Assyrians, refugees from them fled into the city of Jerusalem. Isaiah boldly proclaimed that the city itself would never fall. Apparently he based his conviction on the belief that the survival of Jerusalem was essential to the carrying out of the purpose for which the Hebrew people had been placed on the earth. As the situation became more tense and the Assyrian army drew closer to the city, the faith of the people wavered. King Hezekiah was at his wit's end to know what to do. Finally, the Rabshakeh, an officer representing the Assyrians, came into the city and demanded its surrender. To practically everyone, except the prophet Isaiah, the situation for the people of Judah was hopeless. The invading army was encamped only thirty-five miles away. Forty-six cities had already fallen to the enemy, and within the city of Jerusalem there was neither a sufficient number of soldiers nor adequate equipment to stop the Assyrians. Still, Isaiah's faith in the doctrine of a remnant did not waver. He counseled Hezekiah to remain firm and at last the king in sheer desperation did what the prophet told him to do.

The prophet's faith was soon vindicated for suddenly the Assyrian army withdrew and Jerusalem was spared.[18] As to what actually happened to cause this withdrawal, we do not have any complete record. The historian who wrote the Book of Kings tells us that the angel of the Lord slew thirty thousand Assyrians in a single night. It is quite possible that a plague broke out in the army camp which so weakened the Assyrian forces that they considered it wise to withdraw. At any rate the city of Jerusalem was spared for a hundred and fifty years.

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[18] Although the city of Jerusalem did not fall to the Assyrians at this time, King Hezekiah did have to pay tribute to the Assyrian king.

Messianic Prophecies

Closely associated with Isaiah's doctrine of the remnant is his teaching concerning the coming of a Messiah. Both of these ideas are a part of the prophet's conception of Yahweh's purpose with reference to the Hebrew people and the means to be used for its fulfilment. Although the messianic idea was not entirely new with Isaiah, he did give to it a greater emphasis and a more definite meaning than it had received prior to his time. The name "Messiah," as it was used by the Hebrews, meant simply "the anointed one." The ceremony of anointing a person by pouring oil on his head was meant to signify that a particular individual had been set apart for the carrying out of some special purpose. When a king or a prophet was anointed, it was believed that Yahweh was the one who really set him apart and the ceremony which was held was merely a symbol of what he had done.

For a long time before Isaiah was born, the Hebrews had believed Yahweh's purpose in the world would be realized through them and it involved their establishment in the land of Canaan as the leading nation of the world. The achievement of this goal would be brought about under the leadership of men who would act as Yahweh's agents or representatives among them. At first, the messianic idea seems to have been very closely associated with the office of king. When Samuel the prophet anointed Saul to be the first king of Israel, it was his hope that this man would be the one under whose guidance and leadership the destiny of the Hebrew people would be realized. When his career ended in failure, David was anointed to rule in his place. Because of the splendid achievements of David's reign, later generations came to look upon him as an ideal ruler and to think of his administration as a kind of golden age which had passed. Succeeding kings were anointed from time to time but in most instances their accomplishments were disappointing, and the messianic idea was therefore projected into the future. By the time Isaiah began his ministry the northern kingdom was on the verge of collapse. In the south, Judah had lost her great king, Uzziah, and the rulers who followed him were notoriously weak and vacillating. Apparently they did not know how to deal with current problems and it seemed quite unlikely that Yahweh's goal for his people would be realized under the leadership of any one of them. It was under these conditions that Isaiah began to think about an ideal king who would accomplish what the others had failed to do.

The most important of Isaiah's messianic prophecies are found in Chapters 9:1-9, and 11:1-9, although there are many other passages in his writings which reflect the messianic idea.[19] A careful study of these writings does not indicate that the prophet had in mind any particular individual who would appear at a later time. Because Jesus of Nazareth was regarded by later generations as the long-promised Messiah of the Jewish people, it is easy to see why so many persons have supposed that Isaiah was writing specifically concerning Him. But this position is not supported by the statements found in the prophet's own writings. Isaiah and other Old Testament prophets were speaking in more general terms. They had in mind a political and social program which must someday be accomplished in order that Yahweh's purpose might be realized among the nations of the world. To bring about this goal it would be necessary for a leader to arise sometime who would be able to direct affairs in accordance with Yahweh's will. Evidently the right person to accomplish this task had not appeared so far. Hence, they looked for a Messiah who would come at some future time. Isaiah was confident the Messiah would be a king who would stand at the head of the government in Jerusalem as the other kings of Judah had done. His distinction would be that the ideals of justice and social righteousness would be achieved because of the high moral quality of his leadership.

In the first part of Chapter 9, the prophet refers to the tragic fate which has befallen the tribes of northern Israel. He speaks especially of the people belonging to Zebulun and Naphtali. They were among the first to be captured by the Assyrians. To these persons who have "walked in darkness" and "dwelt in a land of deep darkness," there will come a great light. Someday their captivity will be finished and their oppressors will be destroyed. A new era is coming in which the hopes of the Hebrew people will be realized.

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[19] Although the passage in Isa. 7:14 has sometimes been interpreted as messianic, a study of its context indicates that it was not intended as a reference to the coming Messiah.

> For to us a child is born,
> to us a son is given;
> and the government will be upon his shoulder,
> and his name will be called
> "Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
> Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."
> (Isa. 9:6)

At a time when Judah's actual king was weak and inefficient, Isaiah had his eyes fixed on an ideal king. Someday, he said to his contemporaries, Judah will have the kind of king who will carry out the divine will. The character of this king will be indicated by the name which he will bear. He will have a long title which in itself signifies that he will not be inferior to any of the kings who have ruled over other nations of the world. With respect to moral qualities, he will be superior to any of them. He will be known as a wonderful counselor. Unlike most of the oriental monarchs who were accustomed to rule in an arbitrary fashion, this king will talk things over with his subjects and try to get them to see the reasonableness of his ways. He will be known as a mighty god and an everlasting father. It was not at all uncommon in Isaiah's time for an earthly ruler to be regarded as a deity. The prophet wanted to make it clear to his people that the ideal king would possess those attributes which other kings were supposed to have and, in addition, he would be a father to his subjects; one who is vitally interested in everything which pertained to their welfare and proper development. Finally, he says this king will not be known as a great imperialistic warrior. On the contrary, he will be known as the Prince of Peace.

The righteous character of the Messiah is denoted still further in the following verse.

> Of the increase of his government and of peace
> there will be no end,

upon the throne of David, and over his kingdom,
to establish it, and to uphold it
with justice and with righteousness
from this time forth and for evermore.
The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.
(Isa. 9:7)

Isaiah was sensitive to the wrongdoings and social injustices of his time. He knew that Yahweh's purpose in the world could never be carried out until these matters were made right. The coming king, who would rule according to Yahweh's will instead of any selfish desire, would establish justice and fair dealings among people in all their relationships. In Chapter 11 the prophet says,

There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse,
and a branch shall grow out of his roots.
And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him,
the spirit of wisdom and understanding,
the spirit of counsel and might,
the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.
(Isa. 11:1-2)

Because the people of Isaiah's time looked back upon the reign of David as an ideal period in their history, it was quite natural that one should think of the coming Messiah as a king who would be like David. Later, this thought about being like King David was changed to mean a king who would actually be descended from the line of David. But it is not the lineage of the Messiah that interests Isaiah most of all. Rather, it is the character of the one who is to appear. The first picture which he gave of the Messiah was that of an ideal king. The second one could be called the picture of an ideal judge. The prophet says concerning him,

And his delight shall be in the fear of the Lord.

He shall not judge by what his eyes see,
or decide by what his ears hear;
but with righteousness he shall judge the poor,
and decide with equity for the meek of the earth;

and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth,
and with the breath of his lips he shall slay the wicked.
Righteousness shall be the girdle of his waist,
and faithfulness the girdle of his loins.
(Isa. 11:3-5)

Unlike the actual kings whom Isaiah had known, the ideal one is going to be more careful in the judgments he makes. Outward appearances alone will not be the basis for his decisions. He will take into account the motives behind a given act as well as the act itself. Instead of bestowing favors on the rich and the powerful, as it had been customary for the actual kings to do, the coming Messiah will see to it that the poor and downtrodden classes are treated with fairness and justice. Again, he will conquer people but not through the use of force or military power. Instead, he will win the loyalty of his subjects through the words he speaks. In place of coercing them, he will convince them of the wisdom of his ways. By making justice and righteousness prevail on the earth he will bring peace and happiness to all.

In another passage we are told,

Behold a king will reign in righteousness,
and princes will rule in justice.
Each will be like a hiding-place from the wind,
a covert from the tempest,
like streams of water in a dry place,
like the shade of a great rock in a weary land.
(Isa. 32:1-2)

This is another brief picture of Israel's ideal king who will someday appear on the earth. As he reigns in justice and righteousness the worth of the human individual will be recognized. The exploited ones of earth will find in him a champion of their rights and a defender of their cause. There is, of course, a sense in which it is correct to say that Isaiah's messianic prophecies were fulfilled in the coming of Jesus of Nazareth. He was the great friend of the common man and His teachings have done more than any other single factor toward securing the rights and opportunities which belong to the individual human being.

But Isaiah is describing an ideal and not an actual individual. In some respects his description corresponds exactly to what Jesus of Nazareth was and did. But there are other respects in which the correspondence is not to be found, and we have no right to attribute to the prophet who lived in the eighth century B.C. the perspective from which we are now able to look at what actually has taken place.

Because one of the names which Isaiah gave to the coming Messiah was "Prince of Peace," it seems reasonable to attribute to him the inspiring prophecy concerning the coming of a warless world which is recorded in Chapter 2 of his book. Many Old Testament scholars believe this prophecy was the work of a later writer. The same prophecy appears again in Chapter 4 of the Book of Micah. There are of course several possibilities with reference to these facts. Either Isaiah or Micah may have been the original author and either one of them may have copied the prophecy from the other one. Both Isaiah and Micah may have copied it from someone else. Again, it is possible that neither Isaiah nor Micah had anything to do with it. It may have been inserted by an editor or copyist who lived at a later time. We do not have sufficient information to enable us to say with certainty just who the author was. The explanation which seems most reasonable to the present writer is that the prophecy belonged originally to Isaiah and that someone who edited the writings of Micah used this superb passage to fill in some empty space remaining on one of his sheets of papyrus. At any rate the prophecy is in harmony with the other teachings of Isaiah. It sets forth an ideal which the prophet may have conceived as essential to the realization of the divine purpose in the world.

The prophecy begins with the assertion that the time is coming when the ideals associated with the Hebrew religion will be brought to the attention of all the world. Foreign nations will be so impressed by what is happening in Jerusalem that they will send their representatives to learn about the ways of justice and righteousness. When they have become informed concerning the requirements of Yahweh they will go back to their respective lands and endeavor to put these principles into practice. When this time comes, they will "beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more."

Chapter 10

JEREMIAH

It was in the teachings of Jeremiah, the most influential prophet of the seventh century B.C., that the religious idealism of the Hebrew people reached its greatest height. The influence of his work can be seen not only in the later developments of Old Testament literature but in the writings of Christianity as well. The literature of the New Testament owes much to the thought and writings of this prophet. In fact, the many striking similarities which may be found between the teachings of Jesus as they are recorded in the Gospels and the writings of Jeremiah have led some scholars to speak of Jesus of Nazareth as the Jeremiah of the New Testament, and they have also thought it appropriate to speak of Jeremiah as the Jesus of the Old Testament. The close resemblance of the teachings of Jesus to the ideas of Jeremiah can be seen in many of the accounts which have been preserved. For example, there is a story in one of the Gospels concerning the people of Galilee who had been deeply impressed with the marvelous things Jesus had done in their midst.[1] When they inquired among their neighbors and friends about His identity, they were told it was Jeremiah who had come back to life again.

The New Testament records indicate that Jesus was familiar with the writings of this prophet and on numerous occasions He quoted them.[2] Probably the most important of these occasions was the night shortly before His crucifixion when He ate the passover supper with His disciples. According to the record, when He passed the wine to them, He said, "this cup is the new covenant in my blood" (Luke 22:20).* It was Jeremiah who

[1] Matt. 16:14.

[2] Matt. 21:13; 26:28; Mark 14:24.

* *American Standard Version.* Not in *RSV*.

first developed the idea of the new covenant and the use of this expression on the part of Jesus was an indirect reference to him.

The Apostle Paul seems also to have been very much indebted to Jeremiah for his conception of religion and its meaning in the realm of human experience. In one of his letters to the Christian church at Corinth, he wrote, "You yourselves are our letter of recommendation, written on your hearts, to be known and read by all men . . . written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts" (II Cor. 3:2, 3). This is not only the same thought which Jeremiah had used but it is expressed in almost the identical language which the prophet had used. Paul's attack on legalism and his insistence that the true followers of God and of Christ are those who are motivated by the right spirit is likewise a restatement of one of the cardinal ideas of Jeremiah.

The Book of Jeremiah as it now stands in our Old Testament is a collection of writings that were put together without any consideration for topical or chronological order. Not all the material contained in the book belongs to Jeremiah. Just how much of it came directly from the prophet is a question concerning which biblical scholars are not in complete agreement.[3] It is generally recognized that some of the chapters were written by Baruch who served as a secretary or amanuensis for Jeremiah. Other portions of the book contain historical materials that were probably added by editors of later generations. According to the present arrangement of the book Chapters 1 to 25 contain messages which were given by Jeremiah, Chapters 26 to 45 is a biography of the prophet, Chapters 46 to 51 is a series of oracles having to do with foreign nations, and Chapter 52 is an historical appendix. Within these divisions, scholars recognize the work of redactors and editors who have added materials which they regarded as appropriate. Our survey of the teachings of Jeremiah will be based on those passages which the majority of Old Testament scholars believe were written by the prophet himself.

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[3] See in this connection R. H. Pfeiffer, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1941), pp. 500-17.

Historical Background of Jeremiah

The period of Jeremiah's public ministry falls between the years 626 B.C. and 585 B.C. The four decades included by these dates constitute one of the most dramatic periods in the history of the southern kingdom.[4] It began during the reign of King Josiah, five years before the discovery of the lawbook in the temple at Jerusalem, and continued until after the invasion of the same city by the Babylonians in 586 B.C. During this time Jeremiah was in close touch with the political affairs of the nation. It was his function to interpret for his contemporaries the meaning of current events and to deliver those messages which Yahweh would have proclaimed to his people.

Almost three-quarters of a century lie between the work of Isaiah and that of Jeremiah. Although Isaiah saw the city of Jerusalem spared from Assyrian invasion, it would be a mistake to suppose the Jewish nation was freed from any subservience to that foreign power. King Hezekiah died in 692 B.C. and was succeeded by his son Manasseh who ruled for a period of more than fifty years. From one point of view it was a quiet and peaceful era since Judah was not attacked by any foreign power and there were no major revolts within her own borders. But this era of peace was not without tremendous cost. The Assyrian empire was now at its height and all of the Palestinian states including Judah were forced to pay tribute. This was not all that Manasseh did in order to maintain peaceful relations with Assyria. He re-established the worship of Assyrian deities in much the same fashion as his grandfather, King Ahaz, had done before. This was, in a sense, a recognition on the part of the Jewish people of the overlordship of Assyria. They were a part of the great empire and in order to share in the prosperity belonging to it, they must worship Assyrian gods. The prophets of Yahweh continued to register their protests but the king paid little attention to them. According to the record in II Kings

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[4] For a brief survey of the historical backround of Jeremiah see Raymond Calkins, *The Prophet Jeremiah* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1930), chaps. i-ii; E. W. K. Mould, *Essentials of Bible History* (New York: The Ronald Press Co., 1950), chap. xvi.

21:10-15, King Manasseh literally filled Jerusalem with Assyrian shrines and gave encouragement to the forms of worship that were asociated with them. He also inaugurated a period of persecution against the prophets who had dared to oppose his policies. Many of these prophets were put to death and others were forced to leave the city of Jerusalem and to live in places of hiding.

Manasseh's subservience to Assyria caused a great deal of dissatisfaction among the Jewish people. Many of them resented paying taxes to a foreign power and they were even more opposed to the introduction of foreign gods into their own land. The spirit of nationalism was revived and they waited eagerly for a chance to free themselves from foreign domination. It was this spirit of nationalism which inspired the assassination of Amon, Manasseh's son, within a year after the son had been made king. Although this revolt seems to have been inspired by religious motives it did not prove successful at the time. The "people of the land" stopped the rebellion and put the leading conspirators to death. They also placed Amon's eight-year-old son, Josiah, on the throne to rule in his father's place. During the earlier half of his reign, King Josiah apparently followed the same policies established by his father and his grandfather. At the end of this time a great change took place. In the year 621 B.C. the famous lawbook was discovered in the temple at Jerusalem.[5] When it was read before the king, he acknowledged that it was indeed the word of Yahweh and ordered that its provisions should at once be made a part of the law of the land. Thus began the great Deuteronomic reformation that marked the beginning of a new epoch in the history of Judah. With this reform movement the king not only brought to an end any official approval of the worship of Assyrian deities but he also closed all of the outlying sanctuaries, thus centralizing the worship of Yahweh in the temple at Jerusalem.

It was just five years prior to the discovery of this lawbook that Jeremiah received his call to be a prophet. He was born and reared in the little village of Anathoth not many miles from the city of Jerusalem.[6] He came from a prominent family of Jewish priests who were able to trace their ancestry back as far as Abiathar who was a priest in King David's court. The family had not been active in the priesthood for some time. During the reign of King Solomon when the question of a successor to the throne arose, they had espoused the wrong party, and as a result Solomon saw to it that the family was retired to their ancestral home in Anathoth. Even so, Jeremiah had received from the family line a rich heritage which prepared him in no small way for the important work he was to do.

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[5] The book which was discovered is believed to be our present Book of Deut. 5-26, 28.

By the time that Jeremiah received his call the Assyrian empire had passed the zenith of its power. Its strength had been weakened by a series of events, one of which is known to us as the Scythian invasion. The Scythians were a barbarian horde that swept down from the mountainous regions of central Asia Minor pillaging and plundering everything which stood in the path of their advance. They were not only a menace to the Assyrians but they overran the coastal regions east of the Mediterranean Sea and threatened all of the Palestinian territory including the kingdom of Judah. Two of the Jewish prophets were greatly alarmed at their advance. Both Zephaniah and Jeremiah saw in this coming invasion the fulfilment of Amos' predictions concerning the coming of the day of Yahweh. Fortunately for the people of Judah the threat of destruction from this quarter did not last very long. The Scythians withdrew as suddenly as they had appeared. The Assyrians, however, were soon to experience greater difficulties at the hands of the Medes and the Babylonians. Shortly after the death of the Assyrian ruler Ashurbanipal, Media and Babylonia gained their independence and joined forces in a siege of Nineveh, the capital city of Assyria. The city fell and this event was the occasion for great rejoicing among the Jewish nationalists. An example of their attitude can be seen in the Book of Nahum written in commemoration of the fall of that city.

After the fall of Nineveh, the Assyrians made another stand and were again defeated by the Medes. By this time the Egyptians under the leadership of Pharaoh-Necho decided to take

[6] Jer. 1:1; 11:21.

some action which would stem the rising tide of this new power from the east. Accordingly, Necho set out with an Egyptian army to bring aid to the Assyrians. His line of march was across Palestine and this would take him through a portion of Judean territory. King Josiah refused to give him permission to cross his land and when he decided to go ahead without this permission, the Jewish king marched with an army to stop the invaders. The opposing armies met on the famous battleground of Megiddo. It was not an even contest, for Josiah and his army were no match for the Egyptians. The Jewish forces were routed and King Josiah was slain on the field of battle. It was a tragic event for the Judean state. For a long time they had been at the mercy of the Assyrians, and now that they had been defeated by Necho the Egyptians were also their enemies. Judah had become a vassal state of Egypt. The Assyrian power was rapidly declining but the Jewish people were no better off than they were before. They had merely exchanged Assyrian domination for subservience to Egyptian overlords.

Necho continued his conquests until he had subjected parts of both Syria and Palestine. He used his new power over the Hebrew state to dictate the policies that should be followed and even to determine who should be king in Jerusalem. After the death of King Josiah, the Hebrews had anointed his son Jehoahaz to be king in his place. But this appointment was not satisfactory to Necho. Jehoahaz had been identified with the anti-Egyptian party among the Jews, and the Egyptian ruler was determined to have him replaced by someone who was sympathetic to the policies of Egypt. After Jehoahaz had reigned only three months Necho summoned him to appear before the royal presence at Riblah. On his arrival at this place Necho had him placed in chains and taken as a captive to Egypt. He then placed his brother Eliakim, who was known to be more sympathetic to the Egyptian policies, on the throne. He changed his name to Jehoiakim in honor of an Egyptian god and demanded that the new king exact from his people a large tribute of money to be paid over to their Egyptian overlords.

The new power gained by the Egyptians was not something which lasted for a very long period of time. In 605 B.C. an army of Chaldeans under the leadership of Nebuchadnezzar met the combined forces of the Egyptians and the Assyrians and defeated them at the battle of Carchemish. It was one of the decisive battles of world history. It brought an end to the Assyrian empire, crushed the imperialistic hopes of the Egyptians, and marked the beginning of an era of Babylonian supremacy. Henceforth, the Jews were destined to have a new master. Nebuchadnezzar did not follow up his victories in the west at once for he was called home by the death of his father and made king of Babylon. Syria and Palestine were, however, within his control and the Jewish state though no longer under the domination of Egypt was made a vassal of the rising power of Babylon.

After the defeat of the Egyptians at Carchemish, Jehoiakim who had been put on the throne by Necho and who was at heart sympathetic with the pro-Egyptian party, swore allegiance to Nebuchadnezzar. For three years he remained loyal to his new Babylonian overlord. During this time there was a great deal of unrest among the Jewish nationalists who would never be content until their state was independent of any foreign power. They were always looking for an opportune moment to launch a revolt against Babylon and they brought pressure to bear on their king to lead a movement of this kind. At last Jehoiakim was persuaded to yield to their demands. He stopped paying tribute to Babylon and came out in open rebellion. Because Nebuchadnezzar was occupied with other problems in the east he did not send his armies to Jerusalem to put down the rebellion at once. The war dragged on for some time but in 597 B.C. the Babylonian army did march to Jerusalem and laid siege to the city. Jehoiakim died during the siege and was succeeded by his son Jehoiachin whom Jeremiah referred to as Coniah.[7] It was only three months after his succession to the throne that the Babylonian army entered the city. Jehoiachin surrendered in order that the city might be spared total destruction. He was not treated kindly by his Babylonian captors. They put him in chains and took him to a Babylonian prison where he remained for thirty-seven years. Along with Jehoiachin they took into captivity a large number of his more prominent Jewish subjects.

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[7] Jer. 22:24, 28.

By taking the more active Jewish leaders into captivity, Nebuchadnezzar thought the ones remaining in Jerusalem would be docile and obedient to his commands. He then tempered his severity with the Jewish people by allowing a member of the royal household to remain as their king. Mattaniah, a third son of Josiah, was placed on the throne. His name was changed to Zedekiah and it is by this name that reference is made to him in most of the biblical records.

The task which Zedekiah faced was really an impossible one. Practically all of the persons of ability who had taken part in the affairs of the state were now captives in Babylon. The poor and uneducated classes were the ones who remained. They had just come into possession of the property which had formerly belonged to the captives. They became haughty and arrogant, reasoning among themselves that Yahweh's favor must rest upon them because they had not been taken captive and they were now enjoying privileges which they had never had before. For four years Zedekiah managed to hold them in check and thus keep down any attempt at open rebellion. Then pressure was brought to bear upon him by ambassadors from surrounding countries who wanted to incite a revolt against the Babylonians. Jeremiah protested against their plans with all the vigor he possessed for he knew there was no chance whatsoever for a rebellion of this kind to succeed. He was able to influence Zedekiah and in this way he kept the revolt from breaking out for a period of years. Finally, the pressure became too strong for the king to resist. The Egyptians revolted and set out to free Palestine from Babylonian control. Zedekiah became a willing tool of the Egyptians and joined forces with them. When the news of the rebellion reached the Babylonians, the end of the Hebrew state came swiftly and with vengeance. Nebuchadnezzar's army marched to Jerusalem and again laid siege to the city. Inside the city walls the people were filled with terror. Jeremiah had told them of the terrible consequences that would follow if they rebelled against Babylon. Now they could see that even the worst of his predictions was about to come true. In a desperate last minute attempt to win the favor of Yahweh, some of the people professed to have a change of heart and they went so far as to set free the slaves they had been holding. Their actions were really inspired by fear rather than any genuine conversion for as soon as the immediate danger was past they took their slaves back again.

In the midst of the siege the Chaldean army suddenly withdrew. The reason for the withdrawal was the appearance in Palestine of Egyptian troops who were hoping to conquer some territory along the Phoenician coast. It looked as though the Egyptians might be able to offer substantial resistance to the Babylonians. In this prospect the people of Jerusalem greatly rejoiced. They had not changed their manner of living but believed they had been spared captivity at the hand of Nebuchadnezzar's army. Their period of rejoicing was, however, soon brought to an end. The Chaldean army drove back the Egyptians and once more renewed the siege of Jerusalem.

The Jews fought with desperate courage, but in 586 B.C. the walls of the city were broken down and the Babylonian army poured into Jerusalem. King Zedekiah and a small group of men who composed his bodyguard managed to slip through the enemy lines and thus escape from the city. They were soon overtaken and brought to Nebuchadnezzar's headquarters on the banks of the Orontes River. The victorious general did not treat his prisoners kindly. Zedekiah was forced to witness the execution of his two sons after which his own eyes were put out and he was taken in chains to Babylon.

Only a small fragment of the Hebrew people was left in the homeland. Practically all the leading citizens and persons of influence had been carried into captivity. Over this impoverished remnant of the Hebrew state which remained in Palestine, Nebuchadnezzar placed a governor. He was a man of Jewish descent named Gedaliah. Apparently he was a person of high character who did his best to make something out of the broken fragments of the Jewish state. In this purpose Jeremiah gave to him his full support. There was, however, a great deal of dissatisfaction among the Jewish people who still believed they could be freed from the Babylonian yoke. Gedaliah was assassinated by a disappointed member of the old royal family. This event brought on a new crisis and many of the people, fearing what would happen to them because of the assassination, decided to flee to Egypt. With their plans for escape Jeremiah had no sympathy at all. He was the one prominent person in Jerusalem who had received kindly treatment at the hands of the Babylonians. This was probably due to the fact they knew he had done everything within his power to keep the Jews from revolting. Instead of enslaving Jeremiah they offered him a choice of staying in Jerusalem or going to Babylon. He chose the former because of his strong desire to spend the rest of his life in the homeland. The Jews who were fleeing to Egypt did not permit him to realize this desire. At first they tried to persuade him to join their party. When he refused to do so, they forced him to accompany them. The last we hear of the great prophet, he was still the spokesman for Yahweh among the Jewish refugees in Egypt. His last recorded messages are protests against the actions of his countrymen who have forsaken the god of their fathers and have turned to the gods of Egypt.[8]

Jeremiah's Early Prophecies

The ideas of Jeremiah are the greatest contribution made by any one prophet to the development of the Hebrew religion. With him the spiritual meaning of the worship of Yahweh reached its greatest height. Yet his ideas were not formulated in any systematic order. They were developed in connection with his attempts to interpret the situations and events which occurred during the course of his life. His public ministry, as we have noted, took place during that tragic half-century which preceded the downfall of the Jewish state and the Babylonian captivity of the people. No prophet ever lived during a more critical period, and the tragic events which he witnessed provided the immediate occasion for most of the doctrines which he proclaimed. His greatness as a religious teacher consisted of his ability to see in the historical process that was taking place the working out of those divine principles associated with the name of Yahweh. Our best approach to an understanding of

[8] Jer. 44.

Jeremiah's messages will be to discover his reaction to particular events which occurred during his life.

The beginning of Jeremiah's ministry coincided with the Scythian invasion, when a barbarian horde swept down from the north pillaging everything in the path of their advance, and threatening to destroy the entire Hebrew state. As Jeremiah contemplated this terrible scourge upon his people, he saw in it the judgment of Yahweh upon those who had failed to give heed to the moral requirements of his law. In the spirit of Amos and of Hosea he saw punishment for sin, and also the hope on the part of Yahweh that someday his erring children would learn the folly of their course and turn wholeheartedly to him.

> The word of the LORD came to me a second time, saying, "What do you see?" And I said, "I see a boiling pot, facing away from the north." Then the LORD said to me, "Out of the north evil shall break forth upon all the inhabitants of the land. For, lo, I am calling all the tribes of the kingdoms of the north, says the LORD; and they shall come and every one shall set his throne at the entrance of the gates of Jerusalem, against all its walls round about, and against all the cities of Judah." (Jer. 1:13-15)

The extent of this scourge which Jeremiah saw in the advance of the Scythians is indicated in the following lines:

> I looked on the earth, and lo, it was waste and void;
> and to the heavens, and they had no light.
> I looked on the mountains, and lo, they were quaking,
> and all the hills moved to and fro. (Jer. 4:23-24)

The reason for all of this was to be found in the conduct of the people of Judah. The coming of the day of Yahweh, proclaimed by Amos a century before, was now about to be fulfilled.[9] A just and righteous god could not permit iniquity to go unpunished. The specific sins pointed out by Jeremiah include idolatry, unjust treatment of the poor, and reliance upon Egypt and Assyria for help in place of putting their trust in Yahweh. The prophet had in mind the worship of foreign gods which Manasseh had introduced in order to gain favor with the Assyrians. This policy had been continued by his son Amon and later by his grandson Josiah. Along with these idolatrous practices the wealthier class had oppressed the poor using every opportunity to advance their own interests even though it meant a cruel exploitation of the rights of others. When they saw danger approaching in the form of a threatened invasion, it never occurred to them that a moral reformation was needed. Instead of this, they tried to find security for themselves by forming an alliance with some foreign power. One party in Jerusalem favored an alliance with Assyria while another one believed they should rely on help from Egypt. Jeremiah was sure that safety could not be obtained from either of these sources.

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[9] Amos 5:18-20.

In spite of the fact that Yahweh must punish them for their misdeeds, Jeremiah was aware of his mercy and knew that Yahweh was only trying to save them from the folly of their own ways. They had been a wicked, rebellious people but Yahweh would never give them up. He still had faith that someday they would learn their lesson and return to the only course which could save them. Like Hosea, he interpreted Yahweh's attitude toward his people in terms that were derived from family relationships.

"Is Ephraim my dear son?
Is he my darling child?
For as often as I speak against him,
I do remember him still.
Therefore my heart yearns for him;
I will surely have mercy on him,
says the Lord."
(Jer. 31:20)

Yahweh's dealings with his own people are well illustrated in the case of northern Israel. Judah should have profited from their experience and yet in some respects her conduct had been even worse.

> And the Lord said to me, "Faithless Israel has shown herself less guilty than false Judah. Go, and proclaim these words toward the north, and say,
> 'Return, faithless Israel,
> says the Lord.

I will not look on you in anger,
for I am merciful,
says the Lord;
I will not be angry for ever.' "
(Jer. 3:11-12)

Israel's punishment, though inevitable because of her sins, does not represent Yahweh's entire attitude toward his people. He is a god of love and can never forsake his own children.

"the Lord appeared to him from afar.
I have loved you with an everlasting love;
therefore I have continued my faithfulness to you."
(Jer. 31:3)

A remnant of northern Israel will yet be saved. As the prophet thinks about the children of Israel going northward from their own land into captivity, he imagines them passing through the town of Ramah where Rachel the mother of some of the tribes was buried. He thinks of the anguish and sorrow that would fill her heart if she could see what has happened to her children.

Thus says the Lord:
"A voice is heard in Ramah,
lamentation and bitter weeping.
Rachel is weeping for her children;
she refuses to be comforted for her children,
because they are not."

Thus says the Lord:
"Keep your voice from weeping,
and your eyes from tears;
for your work shall be rewarded,
says the Lord,
and they shall come back from the land of the enemy.
(Jer. 31:15-16)

But this is not the full story. Someday the children will come back again into their own land.

It is in this spirit that the prophet pleads with the people of Judah to change the course of their living.

For thus says the Lord to the men of Judah and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem:

"Break up your fallow ground,
and sow not among thorns.
Circumcise yourselves to the Lord,
remove the foreskin of your hearts,
O men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem;
lest my wrath go forth like fire,
and burn with none to quench it,
because of the evil of your doings."
(Jer. 4:3-4)

The Deuteronomic Reformation

Five years after Jeremiah received his call, a great lawbook was discovered in the temple. It contained what is known today as the major portion of the Book of Deuteronomy. Written by loyal disciples of the eighth-century prophets, it was an attempt to incorporate the spirit of their teachings into a revision of Israel's ancient body of laws. The revision included many additions having to do with much needed reforms. Laws pertaining to the tenure of land, treatment of debtors, care of the poor, protection for laborers, the administration of justice, and many other regulations were designed to correct those evils against which the earlier prophets had protested so vigorously. On the religious side, the most important single item was the law of the central sanctuary. Its purpose was to counteract the worship of foreign deities and to purify Yahweh worship of those evil influences brought about through contact with the followers of the baal gods. To accomplish this purpose the worship of Yahweh was to be centralized at Jerusalem.[10] All the outlying sanctuaries were to be closed and the Hebrews were strictly forbidden to offer sacrifices at any other place than the temple in Jerusalem.

Taken as a whole the new lawbook seemed adequate for the needs of Josiah's time. When the book was brought before him and read in his presence, he acknowledged it to be the word of Yahweh and gave orders at once to have it included in the laws of the land.[11] Thus began one of the greatest reform movements

[10] Deut. 12:13-14.
[11] II Kings 22-23.

in the history of the southern kingdom. For some time Jeremiah seems to have been enthusiastic about the reform. We are told in the first eight verses of Chapter 11 that he went up and down the streets of the land calling upon the people to hear the words of Yahweh's covenant with his people and obey them in order that they might dwell in their own land and prosper. His attitude was the ordinary one of the person who believes the ills of society can be corrected through the enactment of the right legislation. Jeremiah knew that the provisions of the new lawbook were good and it seemed reasonable enough to think they could be enforced. As he participated in the reform movement and observed its results, he gradually became disillusioned. He saw that the people of Judah were just as corrupt under the new laws as they had been before. It made little difference whether they offered their sacrifices at the temple in Jerusalem or in some other place. So long as their motives and desires were evil, good deeds could not proceed from them. With reference to the social legislation included in the book, he saw that similar results were obtained. The laws, together with the penalties provided for their violation, were able to curb certain specific manifestations of a selfish spirit, but so long as the selfish motive remained some new method would be devised to accomplish their purposes. In short, Jeremiah saw clearly that people cannot be made good through legislation no matter how good and noble the laws that are passed may be. Unless the desires and inner motives of human beings are changed no genuine reformation can ever be achieved.

> The heart is deceitful above all things,
>   and desperately corrupt;
>   who can understand it?
> "I the LORD search the mind
>   and try the heart,
> to give to every man according to his ways,
>   according to the fruit of his doings."
>
> (Jer. 17:9-10)

The prophet understood that the springs of human action are not to be found in the intellect alone. Important as it is for one to know what he ought to do, it requires a change of heart or the acquisition of right motives and desires before he will act accordingly. Laws, though they may be of divine origin, are powerless to change one's motives or desires. It is possible to instil fear of punishment so that an individual will refrain from doing certain things in order that he may escape the unpleasant consequences that are likely to follow. But no fear of punishment can make one refrain from desiring to do the things that have been forbidden. According to Jeremiah it is only Yahweh who has the power to change human desires.

> Can the Ethiopian change his skin
> or the leopard his spots?
> Then also you can do good
> who are accustomed to do evil.
> (Jer. 13:23)

This new insight on the part of Jeremiah into the motivations of human action and the only way in which these can be changed, led him to reverse his position concerning the laws of Deuteronomy. He was in sympathy with the goal which these laws were designed to accomplish but he knew that unless the desires of the people had been changed the laws would be ineffective. He knew, too, that once the desires of the people had been changed, the laws would no longer be necessary. Through the centuries the Jewish religion has usually been characterized as legalistic or one that finds virtue only in obedience to law. This characterization is accurate so far as the majority of Old Testament writers are concerned. But Jeremiah is a notable exception. He recognized the importance and value of law, but at the same time he was aware of its limitations.

The Doctrine of the New Covenant

This recognition of the limitations of law led to a rethinking and restatement of the entire concept of Yahweh's relation to the Hebrew people. From the days of Moses the idea of a covenant relationship between Yahweh and his people had been the basic concept of the Hebrew religion. According to this covenant or contract, Yahweh had given his law to his people and they had agreed to obey it. So long as the people were faithful to their obligation Yahweh would be their god and give to them whatever protection and security would be needed for their own good. It is true that the specific obligations included in this covenant relationship had changed from time to time. In the writing of Deuteronomy a great many new laws had been added. Still, the basic idea remained. Religion continued to be interpreted in terms of obedience to the requirements which Yahweh had made of them. Jeremiah is the first among his countrymen to see the utter inadequacy of this concept. He saw that the people had promised to do something which they were unable to do unless their desires and motives were changed. It was on this point that the emphasis needed to be placed. Yahweh was willing to change their hearts if they would only consent to let him do it. Unless this change should take place, they had no right to regard themselves as loyal followers of him.

> "Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant which they broke, though I was their husband, says the LORD. But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it upon their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people." (Jer. 31:31-33)

It is in this passage that Jeremiah becomes the exponent of the doctrine of the inwardness of religion. Instead of conformity to an external law, the real meaning of religion is to be found in those actions which spring spontaneously from a changed heart. This interpretation put the temple at Jerusalem and all the services that were connected with it in a new light. The offering of sacrifices, the burning of incense, the making of long prayers, and attendance at religious services, became a matter of secondary importance. So long as they might contribute something toward an inner spiritual experience they possessed some value, but even then it was only an instrumental value. In themselves, actions of this kind were of no value at all. In fact they might even become detrimental to the individual because of the tendency to think of them as ends in themselves. If the individual believed it was the overt act that was most important, instead of the motive that was behind the act, he would probably feel satisfied with himself no matter how much greed, jealousy, hatred, or selfishness was present in his heart.

Jeremiah was convinced that his fellow-countrymen were entirely wrong in placing their trust in the temple and its services. It was possible to do everything that was required in connection with these forms of worship without experiencing any change of heart, and yet this change was the most important of all. How would it be possible for Yahweh to get his people to understand this? The more he pondered the situation the more it became clear to him that Yahweh would have to destroy their temple, do away with their sacrificial system, take from them the ark of the covenant, and even carry the people into captivity in order to teach them that true religion is a matter of the heart. With the externals of their religious life destroyed, they would discover through their own experience that the only vital element in religion is a matter of direct communion between the individual and Yahweh. Jeremiah's own experience had taught him this. In many respects he was a very lonely person. The king regarded him as a dangerous radical and most of the prominent religious leaders in Jerusalem wanted to get rid of him. He could not enter into the spirit of those services in which the majority of the people participated. In a sense he was an outcast. Under these conditions, he learned that the individual could come directly into contact with the deity and experience in his own life all that was important in religion. What he had learned by himself the Jewish people would have to learn through the bitter experiences that were in store for them.

It is in the light of Jeremiah's attitude toward the ritualistic side of religion that we can understand the real significance of his famous temple sermon.

> "Stand in the gate of the LORD's house, and proclaim there this word, and say, Hear the word of the LORD, all you men of Judah who enter these gates to worship the LORD."

. . .

> Do not trust in these deceptive words: "This is the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord."
>
> . . .
>
> "Behold, you trust in deceptive words to no avail."
>
> . . .
>
> "Go now to my place that was in Shiloh, where I made my name dwell at first, and see what I did to it for the wickedness of my people Israel."
>
> . . .
>
> "therefore I will do to the house which is called by my name, and in which you trust, and to the place which I gave to you and to your fathers, as I did to Shiloh." (Jer. 7:2, 4, 8, 12, 14)

The doctrine of the inviolability of the temple at Jerusalem had become in Jeremiah's time a sacred dogma. People remembered the way in which the temple and the city of Jerusalem had been spared in Isaiah's time after the prophet had declared it was Zion's city and for that reason it must stand no matter what forces might be hurled against it.[12] The temple and the city did withstand the Assyrian invasion in 701 B.C. and now it was easy to believe it would stand in spite of any opposition from the Egyptians or the Chaldeans. The temple was the symbol of their faith and so long as it remained in their midst the people believed they were secure. Of course the temple represented something more than the building itself. It stood for the entire ritualistic system carried on within its walls. It meant to the people that Yahweh was satisfied with what they were doing and would continue to protect and prosper them.

It was among people who looked on the temple and its ritualistic services in this manner that Jeremiah appeared one day in the open court before the building itself, and boldly proclaimed the coming destruction of the temple and the capture of the city of Jerusalem.[13] It was a courageous prediction for him to make and one that quickly brought against him the wrath of all those who heard his words. From their point of view anyone who would speak words like that must be a blasphemer and a traitor. They demanded that he be put to death. Jeremiah did not take back a single word that he had spoken. Instead, he reminded them that if they put him to death they would be adding to their previous crimes the death of an innocent person, since he had not been speaking his own words but had delivered the message which Yahweh had given to him.

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[12] Isa. 37:35.

[13] Jer. 7:1-15.

King Jehoiakim was no friend of Jeremiah and he would have been glad to give the order for the execution of the prophet, but he did not dare to do it. Friends of Jeremiah pointed out that long before a similar prediction concerning the city of Jerusalem had been made by the prophet Micah.[14] It was possible Jeremiah had been speaking the truth. At any rate his life was spared.

Individual Responsibility

The doctrine of the inwardness of religion, proclaimed in Jeremiah's teaching about the new covenant, had important consequences with reference to the relationship between Yahweh and individual human beings. In the mind of the earlier prophets Yahweh was concerned primarily with the actions and destiny of the nation as a whole. If evil deeds were committed in the land, the whole nation would suffer and in a similar way righteousness on the part of individuals would bring a divine blessing to the entire people. It did not occur to them that Yahweh held individuals responsible for their own deeds. In the second Commandment of the Decalogue as it is recorded in Deuteronomy, we find this statement, "for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generation."[15] This expresses a conviction held for a long time by the Hebrews. They believed the people of one generation would be punished for the sins of another. The full implication of this doctrine was brought home to Jeremiah when he tried to tell his fellow countrymen that Yahweh was bringing punishment upon them because of their sins. They replied that he was entirely mistaken. To be sure, Yahweh was punishing the nation but it was being done on account of the sins which their ancestors had committed in allowing foreign gods to be worshiped in Jerusalem. It was no evidence of Yahweh's displeasure concerning the things they were doing. The prophet was sure they were wrong and yet he realized their interpretation of things was quite in harmony with the ancient doctrine expressed in the Ten Commandments. The more he thought about it the more he became convinced that this doctrine was not true, and so he made another startling break with their time-honored traditions.

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[14] Mic. 3:12.

[15] Deut. 5:9.

> "Behold the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will sow the house of Israel and the house of Judah with the seed of man and the seed of beast. And it shall come to pass that as I have watched over them to pluck up and break down, to overthrow, destroy, and bring evil, so I will watch over them to build and to plant, says the Lord. In those days they shall no longer say:
> 'The fathers have eaten sour grapes,
> and the children's teeth are set on edge.'
> But every one shall die for his own sin; each man who eats sour grapes, his teeth shall be set on edge." (Jer. 31:27-30)

Because Yahweh is a god of justice he will not punish one person for the sins of another. This does not mean that one generation will not have to suffer for the sins of another. It was quite obvious in Jeremiah's time as well as it is in our own that what happens in one generation will have a marked effect on the lives of succeeding generations. But suffering is not always to be regarded as punishment for sin. It is punishment only when it has been prescribed in advance for the fulfilment of a specific purpose. Punishment in this sense had been meted out for northern Israel, and Jeremiah was sure that a similar thing would happen to Judah. It was true that the coming captivity would bring suffering upon the entire nation including innocent persons as well as those who were guilty. But it would be punishment only for those individuals whose actions had been contrary to the divine will.

Jeremiah's teaching about the importance of the individual in contrast with the nation as a whole is one of the most significant ideas set forth in his writings. It includes much more than a doctrine defining the punishment of individuals for their own sins, although that idea was in itself a matter of no minor importance. Religion, as Jeremiah understood it, was primarily a matter of the heart. This does not mean that he excluded the necessity for clear and straight thinking along spiritual lines. He understood as well as any of his predecessors that individuals and nations can be destroyed through lack of knowledge. But he saw, too, that intellectual achievements, in themselves, are not enough. One may know what is the right thing to do and still not want to do it. The motives and desires which lead to actions are as important as the knowledge which gives direction to them. Good actions can take place only when one knows what is good. This enables him to make a good choice but he must also possess the right motive or desire which will lead to action in accordance with this choice. Now choices and motives belong only to individuals. One person cannot choose for another, nor can one individual tell another what he ought to do in specific situations. Each man or woman must think for himself and discover through his own contact with Yahweh what it is that he ought to do.

We would probably be reading into the teaching of Jeremiah more than we should if we attributed to him all of the implications that go along with this doctrine, for individualism, democracy, and freedom from various authoritarianisms are contained in it.[16] However, we are well within the bounds of truth when we say he made an important beginning in the direction of these ideals. In his picture of the ideal state which would be realized after the people of Judah had learned their lesson he says:

> "But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it upon their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And no longer shall each man teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the LORD; for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." (Jer. 31:33-34)

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[16] For a discussion of the doctrine of the infinite worth of the individual and its relation to the idea of democracy see W. T. Stace, *The Destiny of Western Man* (New York: Reynal & Hitchcock, 1942), chaps. vi-vii. It is quite evident that the teachings of Jeremiah constitute one of the major sources for what Stace calls "the Christian contribution" to western culture.

Jeremiah had seen the masses of people led astray by those who were directing the political and religious affairs of the nation. When they were blind or motivated by prejudice and self-interest, they not only went astray themselves but took their many followers along with them. There could be no safety for the nation or any of its people so long as they looked only to human beings for guidance. Each individual must rely directly on Yahweh for only in this way would it be possible to judge correctly the decisions of their leaders. Of course it is possible for an individual to be mistaken in what he thinks the will of God is. But if the masses of the people will each try to determine his will, there is more safety in their combined judgment than in following any one person blindly. This is the principle upon which democracy rests and it applies with equal force in the realms of politics and religion.

Concerning the individual who does place his trust in Yahweh, the prophet says,

> "Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord,
> whose trust is the Lord.
> He is like a tree planted by water,
> that sends out its roots by the stream,
> and does not fear when heat comes,
> for its leaves remain green,
> and is not anxious in the year of drought,
> for it does not cease to bear fruit."
> (Jer. 17:7-8)

Years later a disciple of Jeremiah who was deeply impressed with this idea of the importance of the individual, used these words from the prophet as the basis for a song. It must have gained a great deal of popularity among the Jews for when they gathered their collection of songs, forming a single hymn book to be used in their services of worship, this song based on Jeremiah's conception of the individual was made the introduction to the entire book. Indeed the influence of Jeremiah can be seen in many parts of the Book of Psalms, especially in the ones which have to do with the private devotions of individuals both within and without the temple. Instances of this type may be found in Pss. 50, 51, 103, and 139.

Jeremiah's Personal Influence

Most of the material which has been preserved from Jeremiah is illustrative of one or more of the ideas which have been described in this chapter. There is, for example, the parable of the Potter's Vessel[17] and the Parable of the Loin Cloth.[18] Both of them were used by the prophet to emphasize his deep conviction that the nation of Judah was soon to experience the judgments of Yahweh. The story of his purchase of a piece of land which had belonged to the family at a time when the Babylonian captivity was imminent,[19] indicates his belief that Yahweh "will not make a full end" when Jerusalem is captured but eventually the exiles will come back and be restored in their own land. The message to the captives in Babylon[20] makes clear to them his belief that the exile will not be of any short duration. It will last a full lifetime. In fact, the ones who have been taken from Jerusalem will die in the land of their captivity. Only their descendants will be allowed to return. The letter to the Jews who have fled into Egypt[21] is a plea for them to remain faithful to Yahweh and it also contains a vigorous protest against the Hebrews worshiping the gods of Egypt.

But it is not alone in the ideas which the prophet expounded that we find the real significance of his work. His personal life carried a message as important as any of the things which he said. In the first place, Jeremiah was a man who possessed the courage of his convictions and he dared to do what he believed to be right no matter what the personal consequences to himself might be. He could denounce the king in no uncertain terms even though he might be put in a dungeon or threatened with death for so doing. He dared to predict the destruction of the temple and the captivity of the nation even though either of these doctrines was regarded by many as sufficient to condemn him. He could endure persecution without flinching and he was ready at all costs to maintain his loyalty to Yahweh. His actions proclaimed even more than his words the things in which he believed.

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[17] Jer. 18:1-12.
[18] Jer. 13:1-11.
[19] Jer. 32:6-16.
[20] Jer. 29:1-20.
[21] Jer. 44.

A considerable portion of the writings of Jeremiah are of particular interest because of the light they throw on the subject of the prophet's personal relationship to Yahweh. These sections of the book are sometimes referred to as the "confessions" of the prophet.[22] They are actually a collection of prayers uttered by Jeremiah in times of deep distress when his only source of strength seemed to lie in his private communion with Yahweh. These prayers are remarkable in several respects. They reveal the deep struggle which was going on within the soul of the prophet and the questions which troubled him most. The utter frankness with which he places his complaints before Yahweh is shocking at first until one realizes the honesty and sincerity which lie back of them. He doesn't understand why he must suffer so much as a result of doing merely what he believes to be his duty. He wonders why Yahweh permits a wicked king like Jehoiakim to carry on the way that he does, and he is puzzled over the problem of how divine justice can be reconciled with mercy. At times he seems to doubt whether life is worth living and sometimes he even goes so far as to charge Yahweh with injustice in his dealings with him. But whatever it is that troubles him, the prophet does not hesitate to lay his soul bare before God. In fact, he talks with Yahweh in the same fashion that one person talks with another. Perhaps this is the most remarkable thing about Jeremiah's prayers. They are conversations between an individual and the deity. Unlike most conventional prayers which consist of speeches that a person makes to his god, Jeremiah's prayers are dialogues. He doesn't do all of the talking himself. He pours out his heart to Yahweh and then waits for an answer. The answer always comes and even though it may not coincide with the prophet's wishes it brings to him assurance that he is not alone in his struggle for righteousness, and from it he derives strength and inspiration for the tasks that are before him.

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[22] The most important of these prayers are recorded in Jer. 2, 4, 9, 10, 12, 14, 15, 17, and 20.

It is with respect to the individual and his relationship to Yahweh that the work of Jeremiah is most significant in the development of the Hebrew religion. He shared with the earlier prophets a deep concern with the problems of social justice and the ultimate destiny of the nation, but his unique contribution lies in the field of the individual's own inner experience as the heart and soul of all true religion.

Chapter 11

EZEKIEL

The prophet Ezekiel, one of the most influential thinkers and writers of the period which saw the beginnings of the Babylonian exile, was a younger contemporary of Jeremiah. The only information we have about him comes from the one book of the Old Testament which bears his name. In the first chapter of this we are told that Ezekiel, at the time he received his call to prophesy, was "among the exiles" who dwelt near the banks of the river Chebar in Babylonia.[1] Since the first part of the book contains a series of messages to the people of Judah before the fall of Jerusalem, we may infer that the prophet was one among the large number of captives taken to Babylon along with King Jehoiachin in 597 B.C. He may have returned to Jerusalem sometime after he received his commission to preach to the house of Israel.[2] If he did this, he probably remained there until a short time before the fall of the city in 586 B.C. When he received the news of the fall of Jerusalem he was again in Babylonia with the Jewish exiles where he functioned as a kind of pastor to his own people, delivering to them the messages he had received from Yahweh.

While living among the Jewish captives, it was Ezekiel's task to preserve the religious ideals developed by his people through the centuries, and to do so among those who were on the verge of despair. It was no easy task for him to accomplish. The captivity in itself had been a terrible blow not only to the national pride of the Jews but to their faith in Yahweh and their hope for the ultimate triumph of his cause. Many of Ezekiel's companions in exile had become discouraged and some of them had even gone so far as to abandon their faith in Yahweh altogether. It is easy to understand how this could have happened. History had gone contrary to their expectations. Was not their experience as captives of the Chaldeans evidence enough that the gods of the Babylonians had triumphed over the god of the Hebrews? For those who still clung to the idea of Yahweh's supremacy in the world, there seemed to be good reasons for believing he no longer cared for the Hebrew people. Otherwise, how could their suffering be explained? How, under these conditions, could there be any possibility for the realization of Hebrew nationalistic hopes and ideals? Questions like these must have troubled the minds of many of the people in exile and their inability to provide any satisfactory answer to them had caused more than a few to turn to the gods of their conquerors.

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[1] Ezek. 1:1-3.

[2] For a discussion of this question see R. H. Pfeiffer, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1941), pp. 525-44. It is Pfeiffer's opinion that Ezekiel did return to Jerusalem and deliver the messages contained in the first section of his book to the Hebrews who remained in Palestine.

It was Ezekiel's task to encourage these persons and to renew their faith in the power and purposes of Yahweh. How well he performed this task can be seen in the fact that he not only inspired faith and confidence on the part of his contemporary exiles, but he determined in no small degree the course of religious thinking for many generations to come. His emphasis on the idea of Yahweh's transcendence, his deep concern for the ritualistic elements in religion, his belief in the ultimate triumph of the Hebrew state, and his conviction that Israel's enemies would be completely destroyed, were all to have a prominent place in the thinking and in the literature of post-Exilic Judaism. In fact the very name Judaism has come to signify something that has much in common with the spirit of Ezekiel's teaching. Because he stressed so much the idea of strict and literal obedience to the commands of Yahweh, and because he regarded any infringement upon the demands of the ritualistic requirements as being equally serious with the transgression of moral laws, he has often been called the father of Judaism.

It is true that post-Exilic Judaism was to a great extent a legalistic religion and the work of Ezekiel was one of the most important factors in bringing about this particular emphasis.

Unlike some of the prophets who had preceded him, Ezekiel did believe the observance of ritualistic requirements was an essential element in the worship of Yahweh. He did not see how the religion of the fathers could be perpetuated apart from certain established forms of conduct. The necessary elements included the use of the temple, the offering of sacrifices, and the continuance of all regular services performed by the priests. But it must not be supposed that Ezekiel would have substituted observance of the ritual for obedience to moral requirements. Earlier prophets had often spoken as though religion was a matter of either ritual or morality. For Ezekiel such a disjunction was not valid. As he saw it, true religion involved both ritual and morality. It is true, however, that when these two elements are put on an equality in one's thinking, there is a strong tendency to put the greater emphasis on ritual.[3] This is what happened on a wide scale in the centuries which followed Ezekiel.

The Book of Ezekiel in its present form is one of the best organized of any of the major prophets of the Old Testament. The chapters appear to have been arranged in chronological order and the book falls into three main divisions. Chapters 1 to 24 have to do chiefly with the subject of the fall of Jerusalem, together with the reasons that the prophet saw for the necessity of that event. It seems quite probable that much of the material contained in these chapters was spoken by Ezekiel to the people left in the city after the first deportation to Babylonia. According to these chapters the prophet dramatized in a number of ways his conviction that the city would fall and its inhabitants would be either annihilated or taken to a foreign land where they would become absorbed by their conquerors. Chapters 25 to 32 contain a series of oracles pertaining to foreign nations. The actual conditions and events which are described help to fix the time when they were written. Chapters 33 to 48 make up the third section of the book. The general theme is the restoration of the Hebrew people to their own land, the coming destruction of their enemies, and an imaginative account of the restored state as it would appear after the Hebrews had gone back to Palestine.[4]

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[3] This is due chiefly to the fact that conformity to the ritual is something in which only the overt act can be observed by others. It is not dependent on one's having the right motive.

Until comparatively recent times the majority of Old Testament scholars were agreed that the Book of Ezekiel was produced in Babylonia. The prophet Ezekiel, it was believed, was one of the exiles who was taken into captivity along with King Jehoiachin. He dwelt in the Jewish colony of exiles where he delivered his oracles and wrote the messages which are contained in the book that bears his name. These conclusions seemed to be supported by statements found in the book itself and they provided an explanation for the apparent unity of the writings, the organization of the materials, and the chronological order in which they are arranged.

Since about 1924 this interpretation of Ezekiel has been called in question by many competent Old Testament critics.[5] On the basis of the research which each of them has conducted they have arrived at many different conclusions about the unity and authorship of the book. Some of these scholars have maintained that the Ezekiel of this book was a fictional character comparable to Noah, Daniel, and Job who are mentioned in one of the chapters. The entire book, according to this view, was written in Jerusalem as late as 230 B.C., or thereabouts. This late date of composition enabled the writer to project what had actually taken place as though it had been predicted centuries before. Other critics who take a less extreme position, have urged that many parts of the book are pseudepigraphs or accounts that were written by persons other than the ones to whom they have been attributed. Some scholars maintain that Ezekiel was never in Babylonia and there are various interpretations concerning the authorship of particular passages included in different chapters of the book. In brief, the work of recent critics may be summarized by saying there is a divergence of opinion concerning the unity of the book, the time and place of writing, and the character of the prophet to whom it has been credited.

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[4] The description of the restored state is found in Chapters 40-48 of the Book of Ezekiel.

[5] A brief and concise summary of recent research in this field is presented in R. H. Pfeiffer, *op. cit.,* Part IV, chap. iii.

While no one of these views has gained anything like universal acceptance, we can be fairly safe in saying that these investigations have resulted in the general acceptance of the idea that the book is of multiple authorship. Some of it, perhaps the greater portion of the first section, was delivered orally by the prophet to the Jews living in Jerusalem. Other parts were written while he was living among the exiles in Babylonia. Besides these it is possible to detect the work of later editors and redactors who had much to do with the organization of the materials originally given by the prophet himself.

Ezekiel's Opening Vision

Ezekiel's call came to him on the fifth day of the fourth month of the fifth year of Jehoiachin's captivity.[6] Unlike the majority of his predecessors, Ezekiel records the specific date when the vision was given to him. Other dates were likewise regarded by the prophet as important, for there are fourteen instances in the book in which a specific date is recorded for a particular event. The place where he received the vision is also significant for it furnished proof that Yahweh's revelation could be received in a foreign land as well as in Jerusalem.

The call came by means of a strange vision which is recorded in the first three chapters. For no other prophet of the Old Testament do we find so much emphasis placed on the vision as a medium of divine revelation. Ezekiel is constantly referring to a trance or some other form of ecstatic experience in which he is "seized by the spirit" and while in this condition he "saw visions of God." The experience was usually an exhausting one for the prophet. Sometimes it would make him dumb for a number of days and at other times he would be left so weak that he would fall to the ground. It is possible that he may have been subject to catalepsy or some other form of psychopathic experience. At any rate the experience was of such a nature that it made a profound impression on his mind. Its real worth must of course be judged by the ideas which it gave to him.

[6] The use of exact dates in connection with particular events is, in general, characteristic of the priestly writings. The prophets, as a rule, are not interested in specific dates. Ezekiel appears to be an exception in this respect.

The opening vision is characterized by a peculiar and elaborate form of imagery.

> As I looked, behold, a stormy wind came out of the north, and a great cloud, with brightness round about it, and fire flashing forth continually, and in the midst of the fire, as it were gleaming bronze. And from the midst of it came the likeness of four living creatures. And this was their appearance: they had the form of men,
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> . . .
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> As for the likeness of their faces, each had the face of a man in front; the four had the face of a lion on the right side, the four had the face of an ox on the left side, and the four had the face of an eagle at the back. Such were their faces. And their wings were spread out above; each creature had two wings, each of which touched the wing of another, while two covered their bodies.
>
> . . .
>
> When they went, they went in any of their four directions without turning as they went.
>
> . . .
>
> And above the firmament over their heads there was the likeness of a throne, in appearance like sapphire; and seated above the likeness of a throne was a likeness as it were of a human form.
>
> (Ezek. 1:4-5, 10-11, 17, 26)

The full account of Ezekiel's vision is much longer than the passages that have just been quoted. What did it all mean? The symbolism employed in the vision is too elaborate for anyone to attempt a statement concerning its full meaning. There are, however, certain things which seem to be fairly clear with reference to the meaning of the vision taken as a whole. First of all it was a vision concerning the nature of the deity. It was intended to signify the power and majesty of Yahweh in contrast with the inhabitants of earth, including the rulers of the foreign nations who had succeeded in imposing their will upon the Hebrew people.[7] Something of this nature is symbolized by the composite imagery which forms such an important part of the vision. It was quite common among the Babylonians as well as other nations to represent their respective deities by putting images of beasts on their buildings. Perhaps Ezekiel had seen many of these figures which adorned the architecture of the palace and other buildings belonging to the Babylonians. The most important thing for the Hebrew exiles to realize at this critical time was the fact that Yahweh was still the supreme being in all the universe. The nations of earth, even though they were not aware of it, were really only messengers for the carrying out of his will. It was this idea which Ezekiel's vision was intended to convey. It included other ideas, too, but this one may be regarded as the most significant.

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[7] This was an important issue during the captivity for it was being charged by many that the foreign gods had destroyed the power of Yahweh.

The transcendence of Yahweh is another point which Ezekiel seemed to emphasize far more than any of the other prophets. We have seen, for instance, in the writings of Jeremiah that it was the idea of Yahweh's immanence that was given the greater amount of attention. Yahweh's presence could be felt in the hearts of men and he was known as a friend and companion to those who were faithful to him. He entered into conversation with them as is well illustrated in the many prayers which are recorded in the Book of Jeremiah. But for Ezekiel there was no intimate fellowship between Yahweh and his people. He did not speak to them in endearing terms nor did he refer to himself as a husband or a father. He was the supreme being before whom the inhabitants of earth should appear only in an attitude of awe and reverence. When Yahweh spoke to Ezekiel, he addressed him as "son of man" a title which suggests the contrast between men and the deity.

Yahweh's attitude toward the nations of the world stands in marked contrast to the teachings of some of Ezekiel's predecessors. Israel is referred to as a "rebellious house" that will not listen to the words of the prophet nor give any heed to them.[8] Their rebellious attitude is not something they have acquired in recent years but it has been characteristic of the people from the time when they were brought out of Egypt. Ezekiel is told to proclaim Yahweh's message to them for even though they will not listen they shall at least be made to know that a prophet has been among them.[9] Although his message is to be one of doom

[8] Ezek. 2:3.
[9] Ezek. 2:5.

the people will be made to realize finally that Yahweh is the supreme power in the universe. No one can disregard his commands and escape punishment for so doing. Yahweh's message is likewise one of doom and complete destruction for foreign nations as well. In the second part of his ministry, Ezekiel does see some hope for a restored Israel when the exiles will have a changed heart after Yahweh has cleansed them of their impurities.[10] But he has no hope for the foreign nations. They are not going to repent and Yahweh will finally destroy them. The purpose of their destruction is set forth in the words which are repeated again and again, "to the end that they may know that I am Yahweh."

Ezekiel was not the first prophet to proclaim a message of doom to the people of Israel but his attitude in carrying out the instruction given to him does seem to be unique. He actually enjoyed the thing he was doing.

> "But you, son of man, hear what I say to you; be not rebellious like that rebellious house; open your mouth, and eat what I give you." And when I looked, behold, a hand was stretched out to me, and, lo, a written scroll was in it; and he spread it before me; and it had writing on the front and on the back, and there were written on it words of lamentation and mourning and woe.
>
> And he said to me, "Son of man, eat what is offered to you; eat this scroll, and go, speak to the house of Israel." So I opened my mouth, and he gave me the scroll to eat. And he said to me, "Son of man, eat this scroll that I give you and fill your stomach with it." Then I ate it; and it was in my mouth as sweet as honey. (Ezek. 2:8-10; 3:1-3)

To whom was Ezekiel sent when he was told to "speak unto the house of Israel"? If we could answer this question with certainty we would know whether the oracles contained in the first section were first delivered in Jerusalem or in Babylonia. Three possibilities should be considered. The house of Israel may have referred to the people of northern Israel who were taken captive by the Assyrians. This would account for Ezekiel's interest during the latter part of his ministry in a restoration that would include the tribes of the north as well as the ones from the south. Again, the term might have been used to designate the exiles who were living in the territory of Babylonia. In this case, Ezekiel would have had no reason for returning to Jerusalem but would have delivered his messages to the people who were associated with him in the captivity. A third possibility is that Ezekiel was sent back to Jerusalem to prophesy to the people who were still living in the city and who believed they were going to be spared from any fate comparable to that which had befallen their countrymen in exile. This interpretation of "the house of Israel" would make it possible to regard Ezekiel as speaking directly to the people about whom his messages were concerned. It would also explain several passages found in the book such as the statement found in Ezek. 12:2, "Son of man, you dwell in the midst of a rebellious house," and the account of Pelatiah's death which, according to the narrative in Chapter 11, was a result of the denunciations delivered by Ezekiel. In the light of available evidence, this third hypothesis concerning the "house of Israel" seems most reasonable and we shall therefore assume that the prophet went to Jerusalem a year and two months after the date when he received his call. We will now give our attention to the message which he proclaimed in that place.

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[10] Ezek. 36:25.

The Destruction of Jerusalem

Ezekiel's message to Judah and Jerusalem was one of "lamentations, moanings, and woe." The people who had been left in the land had grown haughty and proud. They interpreted the fact that they had been spared the hardships of captivity to mean Yahweh's favor rested upon them. The temple was Yahweh's dwelling place and so long as he remained in it they had nothing to fear.[11] It was Ezekiel's purpose to make clear to them not only the certainty of the city's fall but to explain why this event would have to take place. The reason for the coming destruction was to be found in the sins which the people had committed. In this respect his message was not unlike that of Amos, Isaiah, and

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[11] Although the Hebrews believed Yahweh's dwelling was in heaven there was a special sense in which they thought he was present in the temple.

Jeremiah. They, too, had pronounced doom upon the peoples of Israel and Judah because of their transgressions, but there is one important difference between their condemnations and that spoken by Ezekiel. The earlier prophets were concerned primarily with moral transgressions, while it is idolatry that seems to Ezekiel the worst sin of all. In his indictment of the people of Judah, he describes at length the abominations that were practiced in the land including those which took place within the sacred precincts of the temple itself.[12] Being led by the spirit of Yahweh into one of the secret chambers of the temple, he saw on the walls of the room pictures of beasts and all sorts of creeping things. These representations of strange deities were a part of the idolatry that was polluting Jerusalem. It was one of the ways in which the land was defiled by those who professed to be loyal worshipers of Yahweh. Within the sacred chambers of the same building the prophet saw Hebrew women weeping for the foreign goddess who was known as Tammuz.[13] At the same time twenty-five of the men of Judah were worshiping the sun with their backs turned toward the temple of Yahweh. Nor was the idolatry of the Hebrews confined to the courts and rooms of the temple. Ezekiel condemns his fellow countrymen for worshiping on the high places, a practice strictly forbidden by the Deuteronomic code of laws. Although those who were guilty of this offense claimed to be worshipers of Yahweh in the services which they performed at these local shrines, Ezekiel regarded their activities as only another form of idolatry. His condemnation of their worship is contained in the same oracle in which he denounces the practice of sacrificing children, one of the rites belonging to the cult of Moloch.[14] For all of these abominations, the prophet declared, Yahweh will surely bring punishment on the land. Only in this way could his sacred honor be maintained and his majesty vindicated before the peoples of earth.

The emphasis which Ezekiel placed on idolatry as a major sin of the people should not be interpreted to mean that he had no condemnation at all for moral transgressions. He was as vigorous in his opposition to the various forms of social injustice as any one of the preceding prophets had been. In Chapter 22, which contains an enumeration of the charges which Yahweh brings against his people, the prophet includes such items as lying, robbery, oppression of the poor, and various forms of dishonesty. He reproves the children for taking lightly the advice of their parents; he denounces the leaders of Judah for neglecting the rights of the widows and the fatherless; and he condemns in no uncertain terms the sexual immoralities that are found in the land. From this passage as well as from other statements included in his earlier writings, we may be sure that Ezekiel believed social injustice was as offensive to Yahweh as any of the current forms of idolatry. Moral and ceremonial transgressions were alike in that each one constituted an affront to the power and majesty of Yahweh. Sins of the one would usually be accompanied by sins of the other. Neither could be allowed to go unpunished. It was for the sake of vindicating the name of Yahweh that Jerusalem would be destroyed and her inhabitants taken into captivity.

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[12] Ezek. 8:5-18.
[13] Ezek. 8:14.
[14] Ezek. 16:36.

Ezekiel proclaimed his message of the destruction of Jerusalem by a series of symbolic acts, each one of which was designed to attract the attention of the people and force them to think about their impending doom. On one occasion he took a piece of tile and drew on it a picture of Jerusalem as it would appear if it were under siege by a foreign power.[15] Putting the picture in a prominent place where it could be seen by the multitudes of people, the prophet stationed himself nearby with a large piece of iron separating himself from the picture. He would then lie on his side for a given length of time each day. Three hundred and ninety days he lay on his left side and then for forty days he lay on his right side. When people passing by would stop to ask the meaning of this strange performance, he would explain that it symbolized the captivity which the people of Israel must suffer. Each day that he spent in this position represented one year of captivity.[16] The three hundred and ninety days he lay on his left side meant that northern Israel would be in captivity for that number of years. The forty days he lay on his right side meant that the captivity of Judah would last for that number of years.

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[15] Ezek. 4:1-8.
[16] Ezek. 4:6.

At another time the prophet took food and water and carefully measured out small rations for himself.[17] As people observed the meager portions of bread and water which he allowed himself to consume, he would explain to them that food and drink would be very scarce in the siege which would soon overtake the city. Again, Ezekiel symbolized his message by cutting off his hair and dividing it into three parts.[18] One of these parts he burned in the fire, another part he cut in pieces with a sword, and the third part was scattered upon the earth by means of the wind. This disposition of his hair represented the complete and final destruction that would soon overtake the land. Once more, for the purpose of teaching the same lesson, Ezekiel dug a hole through the wall of his house and carried out the furniture on his back.[19] In this way he depicted the journey which the inhabitants of the city of Jerusalem would be taking as they marched into the land of their captivity. Still another object lesson was presented when the prophet's wife died and he refrained from mourning in the customary fashion of that day.[20] This strange behavior was intended to convey to the people an important teaching. Just as he had been separated from the one whom he loved dearly, so they would soon be separated from the temple and the city which had been so dear to them. The fate which was in store for them would be so severe there would be no time for mourning or following the ordinary course of living.

In addition to these symbolic performances Ezekiel employed other means to get his message before the people. Sometimes he made use of parables and on other occasions he hurled prophetic invectives against those who were openly violating the commands of Yahweh. His denunciations of idolatry remind one of the prophet Hosea, for he likened the sins of Judah to the adulterous behavior of the unfaithful wife. By every means he was able to

[17] Ezek. 4:9-13.
[18] Ezek. 5:1-4.
[19] Ezek. 12:1-16.
[20] Ezek. 24:15-18.

employ, Ezekiel proclaimed his one central message that Jerusalem must fall. His conviction of the certainty of this event was based on his conception of Yahweh. If people could break the laws he had given and suffer no evil consequences for so doing, this would be equivalent to a denial of his supremacy among the nations of earth. Such a denial was something the prophet could never accept. He was confident that the nations must finally be made to realize that Yahweh is supreme, and punishment for the wicked was an essential means of this realization.

This interpretation of the approaching captivity differs in at least one respect from the views proclaimed by Jeremiah and most of the other prophets. They saw in the disastrous events that were approaching an attempt on the part of Yahweh to reform the people who were about to be punished. Lessons which these persons had refused to learn from the direct teaching of the prophets would now have to be learned through their own bitter experience. But in the end they believed these lessons would be learned and as a result the Hebrew people would be restored to their own land. It is quite obvious that Ezekiel did not share this attitude in his preaching to the people who remained in Palestine. He did not think they would be regenerated and then become the nucleus of a new and better Hebrew state. At the most, only a few individuals would be spared, and there are some passages in the book which would seem to indicate that he believed all those who remained in Palestine would be destroyed. Although the coming of this disastrous event would have no remedial effect either on the persons who would receive the punishment or on any of their descendants, still it would indicate to all the peoples of earth that Yahweh was supreme. Those who transgressed would not be allowed to survive and this would be proof enough of the fact that these laws were something more than the mere imagination of those who happened to believe in them.

One of the problems which Ezekiel faced was that of explaining to the people of Jerusalem how it would be possible for the city to be destroyed, since the temple was in it and Yahweh dwelt in the most holy part of that building. Ever since the days of Isaiah, when the city had been spared from invasion at the hands of the Assyrians, people had believed Jerusalem was invulnerable so long as Yahweh dwelt in it. Ezekiel apparently accepted the idea that Yahweh's presence within the temple would be sufficient to protect the city from being destroyed.[21] Accordingly, we read in Chapter 11 that prior to the fall of the city, Yahweh's presence ascended from its midst and stood on a mountain on the east side of Jerusalem (Ezekiel 11:23). When Yahweh's presence was thus removed from the temple it was possible for the city to fall. The same idea relative to Yahweh's presence is illustrated again in the last part of Ezekiel's book which contains a description of the restored state that will be established after the return of the exiles from their captivity. When the temple has been rebuilt and the proper arrangements have been carried out, Yahweh will once again enter the sacred building and his presence will mean peace and security for all the people.

Individual Responsibility

Ezekiel's conception of justice as one of the attributes of Yahweh did not permit him to think of punishment being inflicted upon some individuals because of the sins that were committed by others. Most of the prophets who had preceded Ezekiel thought in terms of a kind of social solidarity which meant that Yahweh would punish or reward the nation as a whole.[22] Thus the sins of a single individual might bring destruction upon the entire group even though the majority of the people in it were innocent of the wrongdoing that was being punished. In the same way a city or a nation might be spared an approaching calamity if only a few righteous persons could be found in it. An example of this kind may be found in the story of Abraham's pleading for the city of Sodom. According to the narrative, Yahweh had agreed to save the city if only ten persons who were righteous could be found in it.

In spite of the fact that this tradition was an ancient one among the Hebrew people, the prophet Ezekiel made a very definite break with it. Speaking of the destruction that was coming upon Jerusalem he declared that no individual would be saved because of the goodness of another.

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[21] The popular attitude toward the temple is indicated in Jer. 7:1-3.

[22] The idea of social solidarity is illustrated in many of the Old Testament stories. For example, the story of Achan and the wedge of gold, David's sin in numbering Israel, the famine which was caused by Saul's failure to keep his promise, and many others.

> "Or if I send a pestilence into that land, and pour out my wrath upon it with blood, to cut off from it man and beast; even if Noah, Daniel, and Job were in it, as I live, says the Lord God, they would deliver neither son nor daughter; they would deliver but their own lives by their righteousness." (Ezek. 14:19-20)

Yahweh deals directly with each individual. The old proverb "the fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge" is one they will no longer have occasion to use in Israel.[23] A son will not be punished for the sins of his father. Neither will the father be punished for the sins of the son. "The soul that sins shall die."[24] On this point Ezekiel's teaching is in harmony with that of his predecessor, the prophet Jeremiah. But Ezekiel carried the doctrine to an extreme which would not have been accepted by the earlier prophet. He declared that Yahweh not only deals separately with each individual but he judges each person in terms of his last acts.

> "But if a wicked man turns away from all his sins which he has committed and keeps all my statutes and does what is lawful and right, he shall surely live; he shall not die. None of the transgressions which he has committed shall be remembered against him; for the righteousness which he has done he shall live." (Ezek. 18:21-22)

The same thing is true of the righteous man who becomes wicked before he dies.

> "But when a righteous man turns away from his righteousness and commits iniquity and does the same abominable things that the wicked man does, shall he live? None of the righteous deeds which he has done shall be remembered; for the treachery of which he is guilty and the sin he has committed, he shall die." (Ezek. 18:24)

The prophet here proclaims a doctrine of moral atomism which breaks life into a series of separate acts, each one of which

[23] Ezek. 18:1-3.
[24] Ezek. 18:4.

is considered apart from its relation to life as a whole. Ezekiel's argument, obviously intended to illustrate the justice of Yahweh, seems to fall short of its mark. It isn't fair to judge one solely on the basis of his last act. The moral quality of one's life as a whole is far more important. Still, there is one important truth which Ezekiel's teaching did bring to light. It is that repentance which comes at a late hour is better than no repentance at all. Many of the Israelites to whom Ezekiel addressed his messages were in need of some assurance of this kind. The sorry turn of events had led many of them to wonder if it was not too late to repent. Jerusalem's doom was now inevitable. How could any of them escape no matter what they might do at this late hour? There are indications that Ezekiel wavered between the ideas of a complete destruction of all the people living in Palestine and the possibility that a few individuals might escape. However, the possibility of a few individuals being saved is more consistent with other parts of his teaching. If Ezekiel was in Palestine when he delivered this message, he doubtless expected to escape himself, and if he could do this there is no sound reason for supposing it would be impossible for anyone else to do so.

In his enumeration of the acts which characterize the life of the wicked man and those which are performed by the righteous man, Ezekiel places moral and ceremonial transgressions on the same level.[25] For example, he refers to such practices as looking on the idols in the temple and eating forbidden food on the mountains. Sins of this order are condemned along with the sins of adultery, robbing the poor, and failure to provide help for those who are in need. Unlike the earlier prophets who had voiced a greater condemnation of moral transgressions, Ezekiel did not make any clear distinction between them. From his point of view the law of Yahweh included both moral and ceremonial requirements and the consequences which would follow their violation were as serious in the one case as they would be in the other.

Because Ezekiel's conception of Yahweh would not permit him to believe the violation of divine commands could ever go unpunished, he came to think of his own vocation as that of a watchman whose duty it was to warn his countrymen of the fate which lies in store for those who engage in wicked activities.[26] The seriousness with which the prophet regarded his divinely appointed task is well indicated in his statement of the watchman who fails to perform his duty. When the wicked man who has not been warned fails to turn from his evil ways, he will die in his iniquity but the responsibility for his death will rest on the watchman.[27]

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[25] Ezek. 18, 33.

There are two points in connection with the work of the watchman that need to be mentioned. One of these is the idea that the destruction which overtakes the wicked man is not inevitable. When he is warned he may change his ways and be saved from the punishment which would otherwise be inflicted. The possibility of repentance is always open to him and even though it comes at a late hour it is better to repent then than not to do so at all. The other point is that Ezekiel's warning is designed primarily for individuals. It is not simply a general alarm which is given to the nation as a whole. Other prophets had issued collective warnings, but it is one of Ezekiel's unique contributions that he addresses his appeal to individuals imploring each one to repent and become loyal to the god of Israel.

The Future of the Foreign Nations

If the major portion of the prophecies contained in the first part of the Book of Ezekiel were spoken in Palestine, the prophet must have returned to Babylonia shortly before the fall of Jerusalem. His deep conviction that the city would be destroyed and that the event would take place in the near future, seems to have had a most remarkable effect on his behavior. When his wife died he refrained from the customary practice of mourning. On occasions he would remain in a physically prostrate position, and for a period of time his lips were sealed so that he was unable to speak at all. Then, sometime in January of the year 585 B.C., the news was brought to him that Jerusalem had fallen. It was an event of great importance for the prophet and it marked a turning point in his career. He recovered his speech at once and began to look with confidence toward the future. No longer do his oracles contain a message of doom and punishment for the people of Israel. The prophet is filled with hope. The supremacy of Yahweh's laws has now been established for the Hebrew people. It is only a matter of time until all the nations of earth will be forced to recognize Yahweh's supremacy. The captivity does not mean the final end of the Hebrew state. The nation will be re-established in Palestine and the restored kingdom will include the returned exiles from northern Israel as well as the ones from the southern kingdom who have been in captivity in Babylon.[28] But Yahweh's triumph will include something more than a glorious future for the Hebrew people. It will mean the complete destruction of Israel's enemies. The foreign nations, especially the ones who have been most active in the oppression of the Hebrews, must be made to know that Yahweh is supreme.

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[26] Ezek. 3:16-21.
[27] Ezek. 3:18.

The second part of the Book of Ezekiel contains a series of oracles which have to do with the future of the foreign nations. Chapters 25 to 32 are addressed to the peoples of Ammon, Moab, Philistia, Tyre, and Egypt. Chapter 35 has to do with the people of Edom. The prophet has taken into account the leading nations of the Gentile world but he has no message of encouragement or hope for any of them. Each of the prophecies is filled with bitterness and a spirit of hostility. They are interesting from a literary point of view for the prophet has displayed great powers of imagination in depicting the judgments which are about to fall on these nations. There is no evidence of a spirit of internationalism, nor is there any hope expressed that the people who belong to these foreign nations will ever pay attention to the messages which are being addressed to them. They are all heathen nations. They have not recognized Yahweh nor have they had any regard for the moral principles associated with his name. Their very existence as well as their manner of living is a direct challenge to the power and majesty of Yahweh. Not until they have all been destroyed will his supremacy in the world be completely established.

The final destruction of the foreign or heathen nations of the world is described spectacularly in Chapters 38 and 39 of Ezekiel.

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[28] Ezek. 37:15-23.

The prophet has been looking into the future to a time when the Hebrews will have been delivered from their captivity and will have gone back to their own land, rebuilt their cities, and reestablished the institutions of their religion. The restored state will be one of beauty and grandeur, something that will draw forth the envy and the jealousy of the heathen nations. As they look on this new possession of the Hebrew people the thought occurs to them that if they will unite their forces they can easily march up to Palestine and capture this territory for themselves.

Ezekiel pictures these nations under the leadership of Gog of Magog. He it is who represents the united forces of heathendom as they are about to descend in all their might upon the restored state of the Israelites. As the prophet sees all this in his imagination, he comes to the conclusion that this gigantic movement on the part of the heathen nations is the great enemy from the north about whom the earlier prophets had uttered their warning. At last the time has arrived when they will make their great attack upon the Hebrew state. They march up to Palestine, a mighty army led by famous generals. But just as they are ready to launch their attack, Yahweh appears in his majesty and rains destruction upon them.

Thus the heathen forces of the world will be completely annihilated. Their dead bodies are so numerous that it requires seven months for the Israelites to complete the task of burying them. Their bones must be covered and kept out of sight for their very presence would defile the land. In fact the Hebrews will appoint men whose function it will be to scour the land in search of any of these bones which have not been buried. Whenever they find one they must put up a marker so that the proper person may come along and perform the burial. The prophet evidently glories in the contemplation of this wholesale destruction of Israel's enemies. He pictures Yahweh sending out a call to all the birds of the air and the beasts of the field. They are to assemble themselves for a great sacrifice which he has prepared for them. They will eat the flesh and drink the blood of this vast army of men that have been slain. It will be a great feast, for he says to them: "You shall eat the flesh of the mighty, and drink the blood of the princes of the earth . . . you shall eat fat till you are filled, and drink blood till you are drunk, at the sacrificial feast which I am preparing for you." This will be Yahweh's triumph. His people will be in full possession of the land he has given to them and their enemies will have been destroyed.

> "And I will set my glory among the nations; and all the nations shall see my judgment which I have executed, and my hand which I have laid on them. The house of Israel shall know that I am the Lord their God, from that day forward." (Ezek. 39:21-22)

The Future of Israel

It is a very different picture which the prophet has in mind when he thinks about the future of his own people. The captivity has been Yahweh's punishment which he has sent upon them because of their sins, and it is true that they have deserved all the hardship and suffering which they have received. They have been a corrupt and rebellious house but at long last they will have become a changed and a reformed people. This sounds very much like the teachings of Hosea and Jeremiah, for these prophets had believed that the captivity which they saw approaching would bring the people of Israel to their senses. But there is one important difference in the teaching of Ezekiel. He tells us that the people will not of themselves learn of their mistakes and make the needed reformation. Their own nature is too corrupt for that. Like the prophet Jeremiah, he could believe that the hearts of even the Israelite people were "deceitful above all things and desperately wicked." Hence, it is Yahweh who takes the initiative in bringing about a changed nature on the part of his people.

> "I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will take out of your flesh the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh." (Ezek. 36:25-26)

This cleansing which Yahweh performs for his people includes something more than ritualistic purification. It is a cleansing of the human heart from those inner motives and desires which are the source of wrongdoing. When this has taken place Yahweh's people will not only observe the statutes and ordinances which he has commanded, but they will live in accordance with the high ethical standards which the prophets have proclaimed.

Ezekiel's hopes for the future of his own people are set forth in his famous vision of the valley of dry bones. The imagery used in this vision is particularly fitting for the situation which the prophet faced. The children of Israel, having been in captivity for a long time, were very much like a valley of dry bones. There was very little life left in them and their hope for the future was about gone. It looked as though the nation was dead, completely separated from the purpose and hope which had previously inspired it. But even though the situation was hopeless from their point of view, it was by no means impossible for Yahweh to revive them and to put new life and hope into their minds and hearts. In the vision Yahweh speaks to the valley of dry bones and behold there is a great noise and an earthquake after which the bones are assembled each one in its proper place. Flesh and sinews appear upon them and the four winds cause breath to enter their bodies and they live again. They stand upon their feet, "an exceedingly great host."

The prophet then explains that the bones in this valley of vision are the whole house of Israel.

> "Therefore prophesy, and say to them, Thus says the Lord God: Behold, I will open your graves, and raise you from your graves, O my people; and I will bring you home into the land of Israel. And you shall know that I am the Lord, when I open your graves, and raise you from your graves, O my people." (Ezek. 37:12-13)

The restoration which the prophet foresees will include the captives from the northern kingdom who have been in exile for more than a century as well as the ones from the southern kingdom who have been away from their homeland for a much shorter period of time. They will be united under the leadership of a single ruler who is referred to as "the prince." Yahweh will make a covenant of peace with his people. His sanctuary will be in their midst and he will be with them and will be their God forever.

The last eight chapters of Ezekiel are filled with specific instructions for the building of the new sanctuary and the performance of the services which are to be associated with it. It is an elaborate plan which the prophet has in mind. The dominant idea which runs through it all is the sharp distinction made between the sacred and the profane. The success of the restored state will be due to Yahweh's presence in their midst and this will be made possible only if they refrain from any profanation of the sanctuary where he dwells. It will be remembered that in Ezekiel's mind Yahweh had left the former temple in Jerusalem because his place as well as his holy name had been profaned through the worship of idols and wicked conduct on the part of the people. In the new temple it must be made impossible for this profanation to occur again.

To carry out this idea it was necessary to give careful attention to the location of the temple and to lay down specific rules for conducting the worship. The building itself must be isolated from the main part of Jerusalem. It was to be built on a hill about one and one-half miles north of the city. This would protect it from the contamination which would be more likely to occur if it were situated in the heart of the city. Moreover, the temple must be walled in and surrounded by two courts. The people were to be permitted to enter the outer court, but only the priests were allowed in the inner court. The temple proper was located within the inner court and it could be entered only by ascending a flight of stairs, for the building itself was on a higher level symbolizing the greater degree of sanctity attached to it. Within the temple there were three different rooms, an entrance, the holy place, and the most holy place. In the holy place the priests ministered daily, offering the sacrifices and performing other duties which were assigned to them. Only the high priest was permitted to enter the most holy place, for it was here that Yahweh would dwell in the midst of his people. Not even Ezekiel was permitted to see the holy of holies in his vision. Only the angel who had been with him went in that place. So far as the construction of the temple was concerned every precaution was taken to keep out any person or any thing which might defile or profane the holy place.

Further safeguards against the profanation of the temple were included in the instruction which pertained to the worship. Ezekiel believed that the practice of employing foreign slaves to perform the menial tasks within the temple should be abolished. The very presence of these persons within the sacred building would defile it. Their place was to be taken by the Levites, or priests who did not belong to the special group of Jerusalem priests known as the sons of Zadok. This was an important innovation since it not only provided protection against the profanation of the temple but it provided employment for the rather large group of priests who were thrown out of work by the enforcement of the Deuteronomic law of the central sanctuary. This distinction between priests and Levites was maintained throughout the post-Exilic period of Hebrew history. The Zadokean priests, who were the only ones permitted to perform the priestly functions in the holy place of the temple, were required to wear special garments made of linen. These must be taken off as soon as they left the temple lest the people whom they might touch be sanctified through this contact. Other requirements were made of these priests also in order that they might be protected against any profanation.

The services to be performed in the temple were closely related to the idea of cultic purity. In spite of all the precautions that might be taken there was always the possibility of some defilement or contamination which would occur accidentally. Hence, there was need for a system of rites and ceremonies by means of which these stains could be removed and a sense of fellowship renewed between Yahweh and his people. Sin offerings were to be made for this purpose and sacrifices of various types were to be made from time to time. Detailed instruction was given for the daily sacrifices and for the ones which were to be made each month.

Ezekiel does not have very much to say in regard to the political organization which should characterize the restored state. Probably he thought there would be little need for a strong government since the people would be cleansed of their evil ways and everyone would want to do what was right. He refers to the head of the government as a prince rather than a king for he had in mind that the political life of the nation should be strictly subordinate to the religious life. The high priesthood was a far more important office than any position in the secular government.

The influence of Ezekiel's thought and writings upon the subsequent history of the Hebrew people was very great. He presented a combination of priestly and prophetic ideals which the people could understand and put into practice. Although his conception of Yahweh was universal in its scope, his understanding of the divine purpose was intensely nationalistic. His interpretation of religion had a strong tendency to overemphasize the importance of ritual. He was not as spiritual or idealistic as the prophet Jeremiah but in many respects he was far more influential.

Chapter 12

DEUTERO-ISAIAH

For several generations many biblical scholars have recognized that the materials contained in Chapters 40 to 66 of our present Book of Isaiah are such that they could not have been written by the same prophet whose oracles are recorded in the first thirty-nine chapters of that book. It is true there are some scholars belonging to the more conservative groups who do not accept this view. They hold rather to the idea that one man who is known to us as Isaiah, the son of Amoz, was the sole author of the entire book. However, the majority of Old Testament critics at the present time are convinced that the portion of the book which begins with Chapter 40 was written at least one hundred and fifty years later than the earlier chapters. There are many reasons why they believe this is true. These reasons are, for the most part, based on an analysis of the materials contained in the chapters themselves. We will note just a few of them.

When Isaiah delivered his messages to "Judah and Jerusalem" [1] the city of Jerusalem was still standing. During the latter part of his ministry it had been delivered, in an apparently miraculous manner, from capture by the Assyrians. The prophet had said it was Zion's city and he did not hesitate to declare it would stand forever. There is no indication that he ever changed his mind about this. But when we come to Chapters 40 to 66 of Isaiah we find that the situation has changed entirely. Jerusalem has already fallen to the Babylonians. The Hebrews have been in captivity for a long time and the author speaks hopefully of their return, in the near future, to their ancient homeland. Evidently a long period of time has elapsed since the prophet Isaiah closed his ministry.

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[1] Isa. 1:1; 2:1.

The references to contemporary events found in these chapters furnish the strongest evidence for putting the date of their writing during the latter part of the Babylonian exile, and prior to the time when Cyrus, the Persian general, led his forces against the city of Babylon. The author tells us that Cyrus is Yahweh's servant who will be used to bring about the overthrow of Babylon and thus prepare the way for the captives to go back to their own land.[2] To the Hebrews themselves he speaks a message of comfort declaring that they have already received more than enough punishment for their sins.[3] He tells them their warfare has now been accomplished, their iniquity has been pardoned, and Yahweh is ready to lead them back to their former homeland. In fact he will even go before them and prepare the way, removing all of those difficulties which would seem to make the journey impossible.[4]

The messages which follow have to do with subjects which were critical in the minds of the Hebrew people who had been in exile for a long time. The power and majesty of Yahweh is set forth in language which not only convinces the mind but stirs the heart as well. Idol worship is presented in a manner which makes these objects of worship appear ridiculous and inane. The meaning of history is declared to be unintelligible apart from the moral laws which are associated with the name of Yahweh.[5] A new and significant interpretation is presented to explain the suffering of innocent people in a world that is controlled by Yahweh. These topics were pertinent to the experience of the exiles but they are not directly related to the situation which existed in Palestine during the time of Isaiah. Hence it is appropriate to regard them as coming from a prophet who belonged to the period of the Exile and who shared the fate of his fellow Hebrews in captivity.

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[2] Isa. 45:1-3.

[3] Isa. 40:2.

[4] Isa. 40:3-4.

[5] While none of the prophets were familiar with the concept of natural law in the sense that we use the term when we speak of the laws of nature, their interpretation of Yahweh's control over things was similar in all essential respects to our concept of law.

The fact that these messages have traditionally been attributed to the earlier Isaiah is probably due to the particular method that was employed for their preservation in the collection of sacred writings. We have noted in a previous chapter the way in which writings from several different sources were placed together to form what is now known as the Book of Jeremiah. It is quite likely that a similar procedure was followed on the part of the editors who were charged with the responsibility of preserving another collection of writings. By binding them together with those manuscripts which had come from the prophet Isaiah, the entire collection came to be associated with his name. If this explanation is correct, the New Testament references to passages contained in these Exilic writings under the name of Isaiah [6] would indicate their location in the canon of the Scriptures rather than the authorship of a particular individual.

Although the majority of modern biblical scholars are agreed that Chapters 40 to 66 of Isaiah were not written until the latter part of the Babylonian exile, there are many differences of opinion concerning the unity and authorship of the materials that are contained in them.[7] The earlier critics who first proposed the hypothesis of a Second or Deutero-Isaiah assumed that all of the material contained in these chapters was the work of one prophet. They believed he lived and wrote in Babylonia and developed his ideas in connection with his attempts to interpret for his contemporaries the situation and events with which the exiles were confronted, at the time when Babylonian supremacy was being challenged by the rising power of Persia. Later investigations tended to confirm the idea of a Second Isaiah or prophet of the Exile, but they also raised serious doubts concerning the propriety of attributing to him all that is contained in this collection of writings. Critics continued to recognize him as the author of Chapters 40 to 55 but they found plenty of reasons for believing that Chapters 56 to 66 should be credited to a third or Trito-Isaiah.[8] Nor can we say the question of authorship was settled even at this point. Further analysis of the chapters in question led some critics to divide Chapters 40 to 55 into two parts, assigning respective authors and different times of writing to each one. It has also been suggested that Chapters 56 to 66 do not possess the unity which would be expected of a single author. They should therefore be regarded as a collection of writings representing the work of several authors rather than a single one.

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[6] See Matt. 3:3; 8:17; Luke 3:4; John 1:23; Luke 4:17; and Rom. 10:16.

[7] See in this connection R. H. Pfeiffer, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1941), pp. 449-59.

[8] See Julius A. Bewer, *The Literature of the Old Testament* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1924), pp. 246-53.

Even a short summary of the arguments used in support of each of these different positions would go far beyond the scope of our present account. We can only conclude that many of the problems having to do with the authorship of the Book of Isaiah are still unsettled. For our purpose we shall assume the position which is supported by many eminent scholars, viz., that the Second or Deutero-Isaiah was the author of Chapters 40 to 55 of our present book, and that his ministry fell in the period between the years 546 B.C. and 539 B.C. So far as the remaining chapters of the book are concerned, we shall regard them as a collection of writings which were produced at later times and by various authors but which were finally included in what came to be known as the Book of Isaiah.

Historical Background of Deutero-Isaiah

Since we have no direct information concerning even the existence of a Deutero-Isaiah, we can say nothing of his life and personality except that which may be inferred from the writings that have been attributed to him. In one of these writings the author refers to himself as a voice crying in the wilderness.[9] On the basis of the messages which he proclaimed, it seems appropriate to think of him as a prophet who delivered a series of oracles that were designed to bring consolation and hope to a group of weary, despondent exiles in Babylonia. In some respects the situation which the Hebrews faced at this time was even worse than it had been in the days of Ezekiel. For one thing, the Exile had lasted for a much longer period than most of them had anticipated. The Babylonians were still masters of the world, and no prospect was in sight for a return of the captives to their own land or for any fulfilment of the dreams which they had cherished. Under these conditions it is not strange that many of the Hebrew captives began to wonder whether their faith in Yahweh had been based on an illusion. What evidence could they find to support belief in a god of justice who ruled over the affairs of men and of nations? It was to this discouraged and disappointed group that the Isaiah of the Exile addressed his messages.

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[9] Isa. 40:3.

The prophet believed in Yahweh with all his mind and heart. He endeavored to impart his own faith and enthusiasm to the captives among whom he lived. He was evidently an accomplished orator who knew how to present his ideas in a manner that could not help but appeal to the minds of his listeners. He was a keen thinker too, for there is originality in his argument against idol worship and in his interpretation of the purpose which lies back of the suffering of innocent persons. For him Yahweh was much greater than a mere god of the Hebrew people, for Yahweh's purpose included the salvation of all nations. Unlike Ezekiel who had identified the triumph of Yahweh with the destruction of the foreign nations, this prophet believed Yahweh would not be interested in anything so small as the mere restoration of Israel and Judah.[10] He wanted true religion to be carried "to the end of the earth" and his purpose would not be accomplished until all the nations were won over to his standard of righteousness. "He will not fail or be discouraged till he has established justice in the earth; and the coastlands wait for his law." [11]

The references to Cyrus are especially important for determining the time when the prophet lived.[12] One of the first indications of a challenge to Babylonian supremacy came in the year 553 B.C. when Cyrus who was king of Anshan, a vassal state belonging to the Medes, revolted against his overlord and achieved independence.[13] At the end of a three-year period he became king of Persia. Later he advanced against Croesus, the king of Lydia, and captured the city of Sardis where he established a base for military operations. From this point he quickly subdued the cities and colonies of Asia Minor. Having thus extended the boundaries of his domain and having acquired both wealth and prestige through his conquests, Cyrus advanced against Babylon. The comparative ease with which he was able to subdue the Chaldean empire was due in large measure to the deterioration in leadership which followed the death of King Nebuchadnezzar in 561 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar was succeeded by his son who is referred to in II Kings as Evil-Merodach, the Babylonian ruler who released the Jewish captive king Jehoiachin from prison where he had been confined in chains for thirty-seven years. Evil-Merodach was not a competent ruler. He was assassinated after he had been on the throne for three years and was succeeded by his brother-in-law Nergilissar. The new king tried to carry out the policies of Nebuchadnezzar but he died after a rule of only six years. His son who succeeded to the throne was deposed after nine months by a party of Babylonian priests who put Nabonidus on the throne. Nabonidus spent considerable time in the West where he established and beautified an outpost for his kingdom. During his absence from Babylon, the affairs of state were placed in the hands of his son Belshazzar. In the meantime, the Babylonian people had become so dissatisfied with their government that they welcomed the coming of Cyrus and his Persian army. The city of Babylon fell in 539 B.C. It marked the end of the Chaldean empire and the triumph of a new race that was destined to rule the world for some time to come.

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[10] Isa. 49:5-6.

[11] Isa. 42:4.

[12] Isa. 44:28; 45:1.

[13] For a brief survey of the history of this period see E. W. K. Mould, *Essentials of Bible History* (New York: The Ronald Press Co., 1950), chap. xix.

The reign of Cyrus was characterized by a change in policy in regard to the treatment of conquered peoples. Instead of holding them in subjection he treated them as friends. He was tolerant toward their religious beliefs and practices and, in the case of the Hebrews, he not only permitted them to return to their homeland but he actually aided them in doing it.

We do not know the exact time when Deutero-Isaiah began his ministry but the references to Cyrus which are contained in the writings that have been attributed to him would indicate that it was sometime between the beginning of Cyrus' rise to power and his march on the city of Babylon.[14] The prophet saw in the events that were taking place not only a threat to Babylonian supremacy but the fulfilment of Yahweh's purpose toward the Hebrew people and their ultimate mission to the nations of the world.

Yahweh's Supremacy in the World

Since the prophet addressed his messages to the Hebrew captives, many of whom had become despondent and discouraged because events had gone contrary to their expectations, it was necessary, first of all, for him to re-establish in their minds and hearts the conviction that Yahweh still lived and that his power was still supreme over all the nations of the earth. He must also convince them that, in spite of the length of their captivity, Yahweh still remembers his promises to them and will bring about their fulfilment. They must be made to realize that Yahweh's love for them has not diminished, despite the hardships and suffering which they have had to endure. They must have their faith renewed in the future of their own nation and they must understand how this is to be related to the future of other nations and the final triumph of the divine purpose in the world. And in addition to these points, he must furnish them with some kind of an explanation for the fact that the suffering of men and nations is not always proportionate to the sins of which they are guilty. It was a tremendous task that he faced in trying to meet the needs of the Hebrew captives.

The method which he used consisted of a strong affirmation of the things in which he believed. The prophets were not philosophers and it was never their purpose to try to appeal to the minds of their contemporaries by sheer force of argument. They were spokesmen for Yahweh and it was their function to proclaim boldly the insights received from their contacts with him. This is what Deutero-Isaiah did. He spoke with deep conviction, and the vigor and enthusiasm with which he delivered his messages must have gone a long way toward winning the hearts and minds of his listeners. He began with an assertion of Yahweh's supremacy in all the earth.

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[14] See in this connection John Paterson, *The Goodly Fellowship of the Prophets* (New York: Chas. Scribner's Sons, 1949), p. 193.

> The grass withers, the flower fades;
> but the word of our God will stand for ever
> Get you up to a high mountain,
> O Zion, herald of good tidings;
> lift up your voice with strength,
> O Jerusalem, herald of good tidings,
> lift it up, fear not;
> say to the cities of Judah,
> "Behold your God!"
> (Isa. 40:8-9)

The captivity had made it appear that Yahweh's strength had been broken by the gods of Babylon. Deutero-Isaiah knew that this was not true. Yahweh's power and majesty were so great that in comparison with him the nations of the earth were small and insignificant. Even Babylon with all of her wealth and splendor was nothing more than a speck of dust in his sight. Her destiny, like that of the other nations, was really in the hands of Yahweh although none of her people seemed to be conscious of the fact.

> Who has directed the Spirit of the LORD,
> or as his counselor has instructed him?
> Whom did he consult for his enlightenment,
> and who taught him the path of justice,
> and taught him knowledge,
> and showed him the way of understanding?
> Behold, the nations are like a drop from a bucket,
> and are accounted as the dust on the scales;
> behold, he takes up the isles like fine dust.
> Lebanon would not suffice for fuel,
> not are its beasts enough for a burnt offering.
> (Isa. 40:13-16)

In contrast with the gods represented by the idols and the images of Babylon, Yahweh is the supreme force that directs the running of the universe.

Have you not known? Have you not heard?
    Has it not been told you from the beginning?
    Have you not understood from the foundations of the earth?
It is he who sits above the circle of the earth,
    and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers;
who stretches out the heavens like a curtain,
    and spreads them like a tent to dwell in;
who brings princes to nought,
    and makes the rulers of the earth as nothing.
(Isa. 40:21-23)

The length of the captivity in Babylon was no indication that Yahweh had forgotten the people of Israel, or that justice had departed from the running of the affairs of nations.

Why do you say, O Jacob,
    and speak, O Israel,
"My way is hid from the LORD,
    and my right is disregarded by my God"?
Have you not known? Have you not heard?
The LORD is the everlasting God,
    the Creator of the ends of the earth.
He does not faint or grow weary,
    his understanding is unsearchable.
He gives power to the faint,
    and to him who has no might he increases strength.
(Isa. 40:27-29)

Not only does Yahweh still remember the Hebrew people but he loves them with all the tenderness that is characteristic of the closest family relationships.

For your Maker is your husband,
    the LORD of hosts is his name;
and the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer,
    the God of the whole earth he is called.
For the LORD has called you
    like a wife forsaken and grieved in spirit,
like a wife of youth when she is cast off,
    says your God.
For a brief moment I forsook you,
    but with great compassion I will gather you.
(Isa. 54:5-7)

Yahweh's love for Israel is about to be made manifest in what he will do to make possible their return from the land of their captivity. The prophet is not unmindful of the fact that the Exile has been a punishment for Israel's sins, but now that is in the past. It is Yahweh who declares they have already received twice as much punishment as they deserved.

Comfort, comfort my people,
  says your God.
Speak tenderly to Jerusalem,
  and cry to her
that her warfare is ended,
  that her iniquity is pardoned,
that she has received from the LORD's hand
  double for all her sins.
(Isa. 40:1-2)

The difficulties which stand in the way of Israel's return are apparently too great to be surmounted. The people would be unable to do it by themselves but the prophet declares that Yahweh will go before them preparing the way and he will see to it that even those who are feeble or very young will have ample opportunity along with the others to go back to the homeland.

A voice cries:
"In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD,
  make straight in the desert a highway for our God.
Every valley shall be lifted up,
  and every mountain and hill be made low;
the uneven ground shall become level,
  and the rough places a plain."
(Isa. 40:3-4)

The reason for the return of the exiles is to be found in the nature of Yahweh. It is not because the Hebrews have repented of their sins, for the prophet makes no mention of any conversion or moral reformation on their part. It is because Yahweh is a just and a loving God and Yahweh's purpose in the world can never be allowed to fail. Since the Hebrews have already suffered more than enough to equal the punishment which they have deserved, a just God must now do something for them. He must demonstrate that his love for them which had been proclaimed so eloquently by the earlier prophets is as true now as it has ever been. Then, too, the foreign nations of the world must be taken into account. They must see that Yahweh's purpose can never fail as indeed it would fail if the Hebrews were to remain permanently in captivity.

The Attack upon Idol Worship

All of Israel's great prophets had protested against the worship of idols but Deutero-Isaiah reaches new heights of monotheism when he declares that Yahweh is the only real God in all the universe. The gods of the foreign nations are only figments of the imagination. The idols before whom they worship do not signify any real power. To be sure, idol worshipers have always insisted that the objects to which they bow down are not the gods themselves but only the symbols or representatives of the power to which their devotion is directed. But it is this belief which the great prophet of the Exile challenges. He proclaims in no uncertain terms that these idols represent nothing at all. They do not point to anything beyond themselves. They are the mere product of men's tools. It is the smelter, the carpenter, the goldsmith, and other workmen who determine the character of the idols. There is nothing that is stable or dependable about these objects. It is true that they may remain in one place for a period of time but they do so only because they have been fastened with nails.[15] They are made out of wood or they are fashioned from stone and iron. They cannot represent Yahweh, the true God, for a symbol must be something like the object which it represents. There is no finite object in the world that is like Yahweh. Hence, no object made of wood or stone or any other material can truly symbolize him.

With bitter sarcasm the prophet ridicules the Babylonian deities which may be seen dangling from a cart. They cannot help their people for there is no life or intelligence in them at all.

> Bel bows down, Nebo stoops,
>   their idols are on beasts and cattle;

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[15] Isa. 41:7.

these things you carry are loaded
as burdens on weary beasts.
They stoop, they bow down together,
they cannot save the burden,
but themselves go into captivity.
(Isa. 46:1-2)

In contrast with these idols the power and majesty of Yahweh are overwhelming. The prophet calls upon those who have been tempted to give up their faith in Yahweh to stop and consider what it is that they are doing. Certainly the gods of Babylon are not to be compared to the God whom the Hebrews have known. Even if one should grant, for the sake of argument, that the foreign deities do have an existence of their own, there is nothing of any consequence they can do. They cannot create a world nor can they provide an intelligible explanation for the events which make up the course of human history. What a contrast between them and Yahweh! He is the creator of the heavens and the earth and it is only with respect to the moral principles associated with his nature that one can find meaning in the course of human events. The rise and fall of nations can be understood in the light of Yahweh's character, but there is nothing about the idols or anything that they represent that can make the slightest difference in the history of the world.

The identification of Yahweh, on the part of Deutero-Isaiah, with the creator of the heavens and the earth is but one indication of the prophet's universalism. It meant, for him, that Yahweh was indeed something more than the projection of the ideals of a particular nation or group of people. Neither was he to be regarded as merely the god of the Hebrews. He alone was to be understood as the one supreme power that is back of all the nations and he is the one who not only created but who governs all the forces that belong to the physical world.

Who has measured the waters in the hollow of his hand
and marked off the heavens with a span,
enclosed the dust of the earth in a measure
and weighed the mountains in scales
and the hills in a balance?

. . .

Lift up your eyes on high and see:
who created these?
He who brings out their host by number,
calling them all by name;
by the greatness of his might,
and because he is strong in power
not one is missing.
(Isa. 40:12, 26)

It is not alone in the power to create that Yahweh's supremacy over the idols can be seen. His power is illustrated even more in the course of human events. He is able to foretell the future for he "knows the end from the beginning." He has called Cyrus his servant and indicated what he shall do in connection with the return of the Hebrews from captivity.

Thus says the Lord to his anointed, to Cyrus,
whose right hand I have grasped,
to subdue nations before him
and ungird the loins of kings,
to open doors before him
that gates may not be closed:

. . .

"For the sake of my servant Jacob,
and Israel my chosen,
I call you by your name,
I surname you, though you do not know me."
(Isa. 45:1, 4)

. . .

"Remember this and consider,
recall it to mind, you transgressors,
remember the former things of old;
for I am God, and there is no other;
I am God, and there is none like me,
declaring the end from the beginning
and from ancient times things not yet done,
saying 'My counsel shall stand,
and I will accomplish all my purpose.' "
(Isa. 46:8-9)

The prophet's assertion that Yahweh knows in advance what is going to happen, especially in the realm of human activities, is, from one point of view, not in accord with his belief that individuals are morally responsible for the things they do. If one is free to choose the course of action he will follow, then no one can predict in advance just what he is going to do. It is quite probable that Deutero-Isaiah did not see any logical difficulty in holding to a belief in Yahweh's ability to foretell the future, and at the same time believing individuals are responsible for choosing the right course. Perhaps it would have made no difference if he did see it, for none of the prophets were logicians in the sense that we are accustomed to use that term. If he did see it, he may have solved the problem, as certain modern philosophers have tried to do, by saying that things are possible from God's point of view even though it is contradictory from a human point of view.

There is, however, an interpretation of divine foreknowledge which is consistent with the doctrine of human freedom, although it is very doubtful that this was in the mind of the prophet of the Exile. According to this interpretation, the basis for any prediction concerning future events is always the presence of some law or principle which remains constant. This is true whether we have in mind events which belong to the realm of physical objects or events which have to do with human actions. The difference between these two lies in the fact that freedom of choice is involved in the latter but is not present in the former. Hence, Yahweh's predictions concerning the future of human actions would have to be based on the laws or principles which are peculiar to that behavior. Moral laws do provide for freedom of action since they merely assert what consequences will follow whenever a given policy is pursued. In other words, moral laws are hypothetical rather than categorical. Nevertheless, these laws or principles of conduct do remain constant. For this reason they can serve as the basis for prediction. There is a definite relationship which holds between antecedent and consequence. Yahweh is aware of the fact that whenever men go contrary to the principles of justice they will bring about their own destruction. A nation cannot ignore the principles of righteousness and hope to survive. When prediction is interpreted in this fashion there is no difficulty involved in the statement that Yahweh "knows the end from the beginning and from ancient times the things that are not yet done." He could tell the inhabitants of northern Israel, through the prophet Amos, that the course which the nation as a whole was following would finally end in their captivity. Again, he could speak through Jeremiah and tell the people of Judah who were being ruled by King Jehoiakim that the course which was being pursued by that nation would surely lead to disaster.

Although there is nothing to indicate that this interpretation of Yahweh's foreknowledge was in the mind of Deutero-Isaiah, it is a point of view which gives emphasis to the idea that it makes a real difference in the course of human events whether men live in accordance with the principles of justice, and with this idea we may be sure the prophet was in full agreement. It is true that Yahweh's moral laws are, in one sense, the key to the meaning of history. Events in the lives of men and nations are not determined by the wishes of human beings alone. The God of justice and righteousness does have something to do with it and the part which he plays in the process can be ignored by the nations of the world only at their own peril.

We need, of course, to bear in mind that this order of prediction is quite different from the one with which we are familiar in the various fields of the natural sciences. An astronomer, for example, can predict the coming of an eclipse. He can make this prediction a long time in advance of the event and his statements concerning the exact time and place when it will occur will be found to be correct. He can do this because the events with which he is dealing are completely determined and there is no element of chance or of choice that must be taken into account. It is quite different in the case of those predictions that have to do with the future of nations, for here the choices which are made by the people themselves will go a long way toward determining what the final outcome will be.

The challenge which Deutero-Isaiah makes to the gods of Babylon is applicable to any kind of prediction. These gods have no power at all to determine the course of events either in the physical world or in the field of human actions. There is nothing about them, or any principles of conduct associated with them, that can explain the rise and fall of nations. They do not furnish a key to the meaning of history. Obedience to the laws which they have prescribed does not mean success to their followers nor is there any reason to believe that disregard of these requirements will be followed by disaster. False gods cannot tell the end from the beginning. This power belongs alone to Yahweh.

The Monotheism of Deutero-Isaiah

The identification of Yahweh with the one God who created the heavens and the earth was one of the most important ideas set forth by this prophet of the Exile. The doctrine of a pure monotheism toward which the efforts of earlier prophets and writers had been directed now reaches its culmination although it is quite doubtful if Deutero-Isaiah or any of his contemporaries understood the full meaning of all the implications which are involved in it. This is especially true when the idea of Yahweh as the supreme creator is combined with the belief in his embodiment of the principles of justice and also the notion that his love has for centuries been bestowed in a special way upon the Israelite people.[16] It is not difficult to see a whole group of perplexing problems arising from the attempt to put together in a single combination these elements of the divine nature which had first been recognized in so many different sources.

If Yahweh was indeed the creator of the universe he must be interested in the welfare of all nations and the salvation of the Hebrews could not be regarded by him as any more important or desirable than the salvation of any other people. There is an additional difficulty which is always involved in any attempt to combine the virtues of love and justice. Justice means equality of treatment for all. This implies the giving to each exactly that which he deserves. In the matter of punishment as well as in the bestowal of favors, a just God could never give more or less to one person or nation than he would to any others. But love and mercy do not recognize the need for dispensing good things in this fashion. A merciful God may treat an individual or a nation in a manner which is quite different from the treatment accorded to others. That Yahweh had stood in a very special relationship to Israel was an old tradition among the Hebrews. It was expressed in the early Book of the Covenant and it had been emphasized in many of the teachings of the prophets. Hosea and Jeremiah were both fond of using the analogy of family relationships to indicate the love and tenderness which Yahweh felt toward the people of Israel. But no one prior to Deutero-Isaiah had ever thought that Yahweh loved the so-called foreign nations of the world as much as he did the Hebrews. Still, such a relationship was implied if Yahweh was to be conceived as a just God who was at the same time a universal being and one who loved a particular group of people.

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[16] For a discussion of the various elements included in Deutero-Isaiah's conception of deity see R. H. Pfeiffer, *op. cit.*, pp. 470-79.

The problem was even more complicated when viewed in the light of the events of history. The suffering of the Hebrews could be interpreted as punishment for their sins. Indeed, this was the only explanation which the prophets had given for the captivities of both the northern and the southern kingdoms. Deutero-Isaiah agrees with these earlier prophets that the Babylonian exile has been a punishment for the sins of his people but he is also certain that this fact in itself is not a sufficient explanation for all the suffering they have endured. Something more than this is necessary if the events which have occurred are to be made to harmonize with the conception of Yahweh which he has accepted. If the captivity of Judah was a just punishment for the sins of her people, why should the Babylonians have been allowed to escape an equal amount of suffering for their sins? Certainly they were no better than the Hebrews. They had not made even a pretense of worshiping Yahweh and their record for oppression and cruelty was much worse than that of the Israelites. But in spite of these facts, the Babylonians were the most powerful nation in the world. They had been able to conquer the land of the Hebrews and to keep its inhabitants in captivity for a whole generation.

Ezekiel had found a solution for this problem by looking to the future in which he saw complete destruction for the foreign nations and a glorious and triumphant era for the Hebrews.[17] The realization of a program of this kind would set the accounts straight, giving to the wicked nations the greater punishment which they deserved. But nothing of this type could ever be acceptable to Deutero-Isaiah. It was not in accord with his conception of Yahweh. The God who was the creator of the heavens and the earth, and who was also the embodiment of the principles of universal justice, could be no more satisfied with the destruction of foreign nations than he would be with a similar fate for the people of Israel. If his purpose included the salvation of the Hebrews it must also include the salvation of other peoples as well. This, the prophet believed, was exactly what would eventually be brought about. None of the earlier prophets had ever been willing to admit that Yahweh's purpose in the world would be finally defeated, but this was the first time that his purpose had ever been made to include the salvation of all nations of the world.

How could a purpose and program of this kind be reconciled with the time-honored tradition that Israel was Yahweh's chosen nation, the single one on whom he had bestowed so much affection? As we have said before, Deutero-Isaiah was not primarily a philosopher but a religious prophet. Therefore, he made no attempt to provide a rational interpretation for the many problems which necessarily followed the different aspects of his teaching. Like the other prophets who had preceded him, he merely proclaimed the insights which he had received from his contacts with Yahweh. Nevertheless, his vision or insight concerning Yahweh's relation to Israel and through Israel to the rest of the world comes closer to a satisfactory solution of some of these problems than anything the Hebrews had known prior to that time.

The prophet's greatest contribution in this respect is to be found in his conception of Israel as the servant of Yahweh. The term "servant" as he uses it means something more than followers of a given pattern of religion. It implies the type of relationship which is involved when one hires or selects an individual to do a certain piece of work for him. The servant in this case is usually employed to perform some menial task which may require considerable effort and may not be the most pleasant duty. Now, according to the prophet, Yahweh has chosen the people of Israel to be his servant. They were indeed the chosen people but they had not been chosen for the purpose which most of them had in mind. The popular idea had been that Yahweh selected them in order that he might bestow upon them favors which he would not give to other peoples. They were to have special consideration by him and this would entitle them to become the great and leading nation of the world. But it was not in order that they might receive material benefits that Yahweh had chosen them. He selected them because he had a special work for them to do. They were to carry the message of true religion to the ends of the earth. Their task would not be completed until the heathen nations of the world had been converted and their people were ready to give their loyalty and devotion to Yahweh. This was no easy task for the Hebrews to perform. It required moral character of the highest type. But it was because of their moral qualities, or at least the possibility of their development, that Yahweh had chosen them in the first place. The performance of this task could not be carried out by merely proclaiming to the foreign nations the ideas in which they believed. The peoples who belonged to these nations would never be won by argument alone. The only thing that would ever move them to repentance would be the power of love as they would see it manifested in the lives of others. If the Hebrews were to be successful in the mission for which they had been chosen, they would have to demonstrate their message by action rather than merely proclaim it by words. They would have to work for the welfare of the heathen nations instead of praying for Yahweh to bring upon them the punishment which they deserved. If they would voluntarily suffer to make amends for the sins which the foreign nations have committed, the power of their example would be too great for the heathen people to resist. Thus they would be won by the power of love when neither force nor argument would have been able to bring it about.

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[17] See Ezek. 36-39.

This conception of vicarious suffering, whereby the innocent freely chose to suffer for the sake of the guilty, presented an entirely new approach to the problem concerning the hardships which the Hebrews had been forced to endure. Many of them had grown skeptical of any belief in a God of justice because the suffering which they experienced did not appear to have any relationship to the merits or defects of their own character. Those who were righteous would often have to suffer even more than the wicked. The Hebrews as a nation had been guilty of many transgressions but they were not as wicked as the Babylonians and yet they had been forced to submit to the humiliation of captivity. Why didn't Yahweh do something to even the accounts? So long as suffering is interpreted only as punishment for sin, there is no way of harmonizing their lot with the idea of justice. Deutero-Isaiah sees another possibility that can provide an explanation for their experiences. The innocent may suffer for the sake of the guilty. It is not obligatory for them to do so, for there would be no justice in compelling one group to bear the punishment of others. But if the sacrifice is made voluntarily it may possess moral worth. The prophet is not saying that the Hebrews have freely chosen to suffer for the sins of the Babylonians or any of the other foreign nations. It is obvious that they have not done so. The prophet is not relating a history of what his people have done. Rather, he is presenting to them an ideal. He is telling them how experiences of hardship and suffering which they have not deserved may still be used by them to accomplish the purpose for which they have been chosen. By the voluntary acceptance of the punishment which was due their enemies they may win them over to Yahweh's cause.

It was a lofty ideal which the prophet thus proclaimed to his contemporaries. Vicarious suffering was the solution which he offered to one of the most perplexing problems the Hebrews had ever experienced. In the end he was confident that such an attitude on the part of the people of Israel would produce the desired results. The heathen nations would be converted and Yahweh's name would be exalted to the far corners of the earth. Yahweh's justice would be vindicated and his special love for the people of Israel would still be illustrated in the fact that he had chosen them to accomplish the most difficult task that could ever be assigned to any people.

What the prophet had to say about vicarious suffering is expressed in a group of short poems known as the "Songs of the Suffering Servant."[18] Of the songs which are included in his writings, we will note four. The first one is as follows:

Behold my servant, whom I uphold,
  my chosen, in whom my soul delights;
I have put my spirit upon him,
  he will bring forth justice to the nations.
He will not cry or lift up his voice,
  or make it heard in the street;
a bruised reed he will not break,
  and a dimly burning wick he will not quench;
  he will faithfully bring forth justice.
He will not fail or be discouraged
  till he has established justice in the earth;
  and the coastlands wait for his law.
(Isa. 42:1-4)

The purpose of the servant and the manner in which he shall carry on his work are described in this song. The objective is the establishment of justice throughout all the nations of the earth. Even the isles of the sea will finally be governed by Yahweh's law. The task of the servant in bringing this about is a difficult one. It will not be accomplished by loud talking or by any spectacular action. The servant will work in a humble and quiet manner, and Yahweh will keep him from being discouraged until his work is finished.

The universal character of Yahweh's purpose is described in another poem:

And now the LORD says,
  who formed me from the womb to be his servant,
to bring Jacob back to him,
  and that Israel might be gathered to him,
for I am honored in the eyes of the LORD,
  and my God has become my strength—
he says:

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[18] Besides the four songs which are mentioned there are several other passages in which the expression "my servant" is used. One of these is Isa. 44:1-2.

"It is too light a thing that you should be my servant
to raise up the tribes of Jacob
and to restore the preserved of Israel;
I will give you as a light to the nations,
that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth."
(Isa. 49:5-6)

The earlier prophets who had spoken about a return from the Babylonian captivity were thinking primarily of a restoration of the Hebrew nation. Deutero-Isaiah has a loftier vision than that. Yahweh would not be interested in anything so small as to include only the welfare of the Hebrew people. He is not a national god. He is the God of all nations.

The difficult and trying character of the servant's work is described in this poem:

I gave my back to the smiters,
and my cheeks to those who pulled out the beard;
I hid not my face from shame and spitting.
(Isa. 50:6)

The results which the work of the servant will accomplish in winning over the people who belong to the heathen nations is described in still another poem which is in some respects the most important one of the entire collection. In this poem it is Yahweh who speaks first and the foreign nations make their reply:

Behold, my servant shall prosper,
he shall be exalted and lifted up,
and shall be very high.
As many were astonished at him—
his appearance was so marred, beyond human semblance,
and his form beyond that of the sons of men—
so shall he startle many nations;
kings shall shut their mouths because of him;
for that which has not been told them they shall see,
and that which they have not heard they shall understand.
(Isa. 52:13-15)
Who has believed what we have heard?
And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?
For he grew up before him like a young plant,
and like a root out of dry ground;

he had not form or comeliness that we should look at him,
and no beauty that we should desire him.
He was despised and rejected by men;
a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief;
and as one from whom men hide their faces
he was despised, and we esteemed him not.
(Isa. 53:1-3)

As a result of the servant's work in their midst they have come to understand that it was for them that the suffering was endured.

Surely he has borne our griefs
and carried our sorrows;
yet we esteemed him stricken,
smitten by God and afflicted.
But he was wounded for our transgressions,
he was bruised for our iniquities;
upon him was the chastisement that made us whole,
and with his stripes we are healed.
All we like sheep have gone astray;
we have turned every one to his own way;
and the LORD has laid on him
the iniquity of us all.
(Isa. 53:4-6)

It has been a great sacrifice on the part of the servant but the sacrifice has not been made in vain. The heathen nations will be won.

He was oppressed, and he was afflicted,
yet he opened not his mouth;
like a lamb that is led to the slaughter,
and like a sheep that before its shearers is dumb,
so he opened not his mouth.
By oppression and judgment he was taken away;
and as for his generation, who considered
that he was cut off out of the land of the living,
stricken for the transgression of my people?
And they made his grave with the wicked
and with a rich man in his death,
although he had done no violence,
and there was no deceit in his mouth.

Yet it was the will of the Lord to bruise him;
he has put him to grief;
when he makes himself an offering for sin,
he shall see his offspring, he shall prolong his days;
the will of the Lord shall prosper in his hand;
he shall see the fruit of the travail of his soul and be satisfied;
by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant,
make many to be accounted righteous;
and he shall bear their iniquities.
(Isa. 53:7-11)

To whom does the servant of these poems refer? There is no complete agreement among biblical scholars concerning the answer to this question. In the main, the answers which have been given fall into two groups, those who identify the servant with the Israelite nation, and those who maintain the prophet had in mind some particular individual. Among the latter there is a difference of opinion as to the specific person whom the prophet had in mind.[19] Some writers have maintained it was the prophet Jeremiah; others have said it was a contemporary of Deutero-Isaiah or possibly the prophet himself. Among Christians the view has been widely held that the servant of these poems was none other than the promised Messiah and they find a fulfilment of what the prophet had said in the career and death of Jesus of Nazareth.

Considerable evidence can be produced in support of each one of these positions. It is possible that the prophet may have used the term "servant" to refer to the nation of Israel in some instances and he may have had in mind one or more specific individuals at other times when he used the same word. The fact that he uses the personal pronoun in some of the poems does not necessarily mean that he had in mind a particular individual, for the prophets were accustomed to speak of the nation as Yahweh's son or daughter. Sometimes they referred to Israel as Yahweh's wife. Some of the poems identify the servant directly with the Hebrew people and anyone who is familiar with the situation which the exiles faced can see how the statements concerning the work of the servant could very well be applied to them.

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[19] See R. H. Pfeiffer, *op. cit.*, pp. 459-62.

On the other hand, the work of the servant seems to correspond very closely with the activities of a particular person. This is especially true of Jesus of Nazareth. No more perfect example of the innocent suffering for the sake of the guilty could be found. The language which the prophet uses in describing the personality and work of the servant is particularly applicable to Him. Did the prophet have the Nazarene in mind? It seems very doubtful that he did although the New Testament presents considerable evidence to indicate that Jesus of Nazareth did find in the suffering servant of Deutero-Isaiah a prototype of Himself. What seems most probable to the present writer is that we have in these poems the presentation of an ideal. It is the ideal of vicarious suffering. The innocent voluntarily suffers for the guilty and as a result of this manifestation of love the guilty are won. The author of the poems believed in the validity of this ideal. He hoped to see it illustrated in the future experience of the Hebrew people. It has been shown to some degree in almost every great movement which has brought progress to the human race. Its greatest illustration is without doubt the one which it received in the life and death of Jesus of Nazareth. But it was the ideal which was stressed by the prophet rather than any one specific embodiment of it.

Chapter 13

MINOR PROPHETS

The traditional classification of Old Testament prophets into two groups known respectively as major and minor was based almost entirely on the size of the book attributed to each one. Thus the prophets whose names came to be associated with large books were known as the major prophets and the ones who were credited with the writing of small ones were called minor prophets. While this method of distinguishing between the two groups of prophets had some advantages, we are all aware of the fact that the size of a book or collection of writings is not, in itself, a true means of measuring its worth. Neither can a prophet's significance for later generations be determined by the length of the writings which he produced. Some of the greatest writings known to us are of short length, and some of the world's greatest teachers have written very little that has been preserved. We know, too, that in the case of the Old Testament prophets, they did not write everything that is now included in the books which bear their names. In the books attributed to the so-called major prophets we have in each instance a collection of writings only a portion of which can be said to be the work of the prophet himself.[1] Since this is true it would obviously be unfair to evaluate the work of these prophets on the basis of the number of writings included in the different books.

There is, however, another reason for designating the same list of prophets as major or minor. The reason has to do with the quality of their writing as determined by the influence which they have had on subsequent generations. Some of the prophets whose names have been associated with short books were men of limited vision.[2] Their understanding of the nature of Yahweh and his relation to the nations of earth was on a lower plane than that of the prophets whose works we have considered in preceding chapters. We may therefore regard them as minor prophets in the sense that they exercised only a lesser influence on the development of those elements that were truly great in the religion of the Hebrew people. But this was not true of all the prophets who wrote short books. Amos and Hosea, for example, were both men of great spiritual stature. Although each of their books was small in size, the quality of their writings entitles them to be reckoned with Israel's great prophets.[3]

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[1] The same is true of both major and minor prophets in this respect. There is probably not a single book credited to any of the prophets that has not undergone some change or addition at the hands of editors and redactors.

The prophets whose writings will be considered in this chapter were, in some respects at least, men of minor influence. They did not possess the vision of an Isaiah or a Jeremiah. Their writings do, however, represent a type of thinking which constitutes an important part of the literature of the Old Testament and it is for this reason that we must take account of them.

Micah

The prophet Micah, who lived in the little village of Moresheth not far from Jerusalem, was a contemporary of Isaiah. He prophesied during the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah.[4] Not very much is known about his life and there is considerable disagreement among Old Testament scholars as to how much of the book which bears his name can really be credited to him. We do know from a passage which appears in the Book of Jeremiah that a century after his death his memory was held in high esteem.[5] In fact, Jeremiah's life was spared because it was pointed out that his teaching concerning the coming destruction of Jerusalem was in harmony with a prophecy which Micah had proclaimed a century before that time.

We would gather from the first chapters in the Book of Micah that the prophet belonged to the poorer classes of society. His sympathies are with the working people and his soul is sensitive to the many hardships and injustices which have been inflicted upon them by the rich and powerful landowners. His protest against the wrongs that were being inflicted through the social and economic conditions of his time remind us of the spirit and message of Amos. Like the earlier prophet of northern Israel, Micah is convinced that Yahweh will not sustain a nation which openly flaunts the principles of justice and social righteousness. He is sure that punishment will be meted out to the evildoers and he is equally certain that the time is not far distant when this will be accomplished. In fact, the very events which he saw taking place at the time when he uttered his prophecies were evidence of the impending doom. Because Yahweh was a god of righteousness he could not permit a nation to survive if it continued to transgress the moral requirements which he had prescribed.

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[2] Obadiah, Nahum, Joel, and Haggai were prophets of limited vision. The Book of Jonah has sometimes been listed among the minor prophets but this is a mistake. The book belongs with the short stories of the Old Testament.

[3] The same can be said of Micah and there are elements of greatness in other minor prophets as well.

[4] Mic. 1:1.

[5] Jer. 26:18.

How much of the present Book of Micah came from the prophet himself and what portions have been added to the original manuscript are questions that cannot be answered with certainty.[6] Most critics of the Old Testament are agreed that Micah is the author of the first three chapters. Others would credit to him, in addition to these chapters, the rest of the messages which contain a prediction of woes that are soon to be visited on the land. A few scholars believe Micah may have given us even more. He might be the author of that famous passage found in Chapter 6 which sets forth the prophetic conception of Yahweh worship at its very best.[7] It is also not unreasonable to attribute to him the messianic prophecy recorded in Chapter 5 since this prophecy is so closely related to the idea of Yahweh's deep concern for the poor and exploited classes of people.[8] In the light of information available at the present time, we will be on fairly safe ground if we think of Micah as the prophet who was responsible not only for the first three chapters but for those parts of succeeding chapters that can be integrated with the ideas that are set forth in the first three.

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[6] See in this connection Fleming James, *Personalities of the Old Testament* (New York: Chas. Scribner's Sons, 1947), p. 270.

[7] Mic. 6:6-8.

[8] Mic. 5:2.

When Micah began his ministry the city of Samaria had not, as yet, fallen to the Assyrians. The prophet was, however, aware of those conditions which were about to bring destruction upon the last remnants of the northern kingdom and he did not hesitate to predict the punishment which would soon overtake them. But most of his messages were directed to the people of the south, for he saw in Judah the same conditions that had brought ruin to the people of the north. Living as he did in one of the small country villages outside Jerusalem, he was made to see each day the sufferings and hardships inflicted upon the poor by the wealthy landowners who lived in the city and who dwelt in comparative ease and idleness. As he saw the Assyrian armies extending their conquests beyond the borders of northern Israel, he realized the danger that was imminent for the entire southern kingdom. It was not simply the advance of a foreign power that made him fear for the safety of his people. It was the fact that his people had ignored the demands of justice and did not therefore have any moral basis for survival. If Israel had fallen because of her transgression of the requirements of justice, how could Judah hope to escape so long as she continued to follow a similar course? Not even Jerusalem could be spared. How could a just and righteous Yahweh spare the capital city of Judah when it was in this place that the social and economic policies of the country were being formulated and the ones who were in positions of political power were most responsible for the conditions which existed? Unlike the prophet Isaiah, who lived in Jerusalem and proclaimed its inviolability declaring that Zion's city would never fall, Micah makes the bold prediction:

Therefore because of you
    Zion shall be ploughed as a field;
Jerusalem shall become a heap of ruins,
    and the mountain of the house a wooded height.
(Mic. 3:12)

Seldom, if ever, has a prophet been more vehement than Micah in his condemnation of social injustice.

And I said:
Hear, you heads of Jacob
    and rulers of the house of Israel!

Is it not for you to know justice?—
    you who hate the good and love the evil
who tear the skin from off my people,
    and their flesh from off their bones;
who eat the flesh of my people,
    and flay their skin from off them,
and break their bones in pieces,
    and chop them up like meat in a kettle,
    and flesh in a caldron.
(Mic. 3:1-3)

Those who possess the power of wealth seize every opportunity to further their own interests, even though by so doing they inflict suffering and hardship upon innocent people. Not justice but power is the determining factor for the course which they pursue. They do whatever they are able to do rather than those things which it might be right for them to do. This is Micah's indictment against them:

Woe to those who devise wickedness
    and work evil upon their beds!
When the morning dawns, they perform it,
    because it is in the power of their hand.
They covet fields, and seize them;
    and houses, and take them away;
they oppress a man and his house,
    a man and his inheritance.
(Mic. 2:1-2)

The people to whom Micah spoke turned a deaf ear to his messages. They insisted that he had no right to speak to them in that manner. A prophet should speak words of comfort. He should not indicate that Yahweh is impatient with them or that he seriously disapproves of the course they are following.[9] Nevertheless, Micah continued to speak as he had done before. He had only contempt for those who would put aside the words of Yahweh in order to speak a message which would be pleasing to the people and thus win favors for themselves. His words indicate that he saw clearly the falsehood and deceit involved in the work of the false prophets:

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[9] Mic. 2:6-8.

> Thus says the LORD concerning the prophets
>   who lead my people astray,
> who cry "Peace"
>   when they have something to eat,
> but declare war against him
>   who puts nothing into their mouths.
> Therefore it shall be night to you, without vision,
>   and darkness to you, without divination.
> The sun shall go down upon the prophets,
>   and the day shall be black over them;
> (Mic. 3:5-6)

Against the leaders of Israel and Judah he has this to say:

> Hear this, you heads of the house of Jacob
>   and rulers of the house of Israel,
> who abhor justice
>   and pervert all equity,
> who build Zion with blood
>   and Jerusalem with wrong.
> Its heads give judgment for a bribe,
>   its priests teach for hire,
>   its prophets divine for money;
> yet they lean upon the LORD and say,
>   "Is not the LORD in the midst of us?
>   No evil shall come upon us."
> (Mic. 3:9-11)

It is evident that Micah has been edited and many additions made to the original work of the prophet. One of these additions is the prophecy concerning the coming of a warless world.[10] The same prophecy may be found in Chapter 2 of Isaiah and it appears again in Chapter 4 of Micah. It seems probable that some editor, finding that one of his sheets of parchment was not filled, looked about for some worthy document which might be inserted in that space.

In Chapter 5 of Micah there is a prophecy concerning the coming of Israel's Messiah. Whether it was written by Micah or one of his disciples, we are unable to say. The prophecy is unique in naming the particular village where he is to be born.

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[10] Mic. 4:1-3.

But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah,
 who are little to be among the clans of Judah,
from you shall come forth for me
 one who is to be ruler in Israel,
whose origin is from of old, from ancient days.
(Mic. 5:2)

We have noted that Micah's sympathies are with the poorer classes of people who dwelt in the country towns and villages. If the coming of the Messiah was to bring about a reign of justice upon the earth it would seem most appropriate for him to come from that class which had been most exploited. He would thus appear as their representative and one who could in a special sense champion their cause. It was probably for this reason that Micah named the village which has been mentioned.

Whether the first eight verses of Chapter 6 were written by Micah or added by some later writer, they constitute one of the noblest conceptions of religion that can be found in the entire Old Testament. It is here that the requirements of Yahweh are defined, not in terms of ritual or ceremonies, but in the possession on the part of human beings of those moral qualities which make for kindness, justice, and the spirit of humility. No prophet has ever risen to greater heights than the one indicated here. It is safe to say that whatever progress has been achieved by mankind through the centuries that have followed has been in the direction of those ideals which are expressed in these verses.

Zephaniah

Zephaniah's ministry falls in the period which preceded the discovery of the lawbook during the reign of Josiah. He is said to have been the great-great-grandson of Hezekiah[11] but this does not necessarily imply that he was of royal descent, for the name Hezekiah was fairly common among the Hebrew people, and we have no proof that one of his ancestors was the king of Judah. He was a prophet who, apparently, had only one message to proclaim. He believed in the sovereignty of Yahweh and for this reason he could see only one fate in store for the people of Judah and that was a terrible punishment to be visited upon them because of their sins.

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[11] Zeph. 1:1.

The prophet was greatly disturbed by the religious situation which he had observed in Jerusalem.[12] He had witnessed the results of the counter-reformation which had been inaugurated by King Manasseh, and he knew that the nation could not endure as long as these conditions prevailed. The worship of Yahweh was not the exalted thing which the earlier prophets had proclaimed. The moral emphasis of their teachings had been forgotten and in its place there existed a curious mixture of rites and ceremonies derived in part from the worship of Baal and other foreign deities. The people had adopted many foreign fashions, and to the worship of Yahweh there was an attitude of indifference. Yahweh, they said, would bring neither good nor evil upon them.[13] Why, then, should they not continue with any course of action that happened to be pleasing to them?

It was against this mockery of the god of Israel that Zephaniah protested with all the vigor he possessed. The immediate occasion for his oracle of doom was the threatened invasion of Judah by the Scythians. It was the same situation that called forth the earlier prophecies of Jeremiah. As Zephaniah contemplated the advance of this barbarian horde, he came to the conclusion that the day of judgment for the people of Judah was at hand. The Scythians were known to be merciless in their treatment of conquered peoples. They pillaged, robbed, and burned wherever they went and the path which they left behind them was one of complete destruction. Was not their advance into the kingdom of Judah the coming of the day of Yahweh which the prophet Amos had declared more than a century before? Zephaniah believed it was indeed the day of judgment for his people. The coming events should stir them out of their lethargy and enable them to see that Yahweh was still the supreme power in the world. The coming destruction of Judah by the advancing Scythians was none other than the punishment which Yahweh brings on those who transgress his requirements. The day of judgment was close at hand.

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[12] For a brief account of the history of this period see E. W. K. Mould, *Essentials of Bible History* (New York: The Ronald Press Co., 1950), chap. xvi.

[13] Zeph. 3:4-5.

The great day of the Lord is near,
near and hastening fast;
the sound of the day of the Lord is bitter,
the mighty man cries aloud there.
A day of wrath is that day,
a day of distress and anguish,
a day of ruin and devastation,
a day of darkness and gloom,
a day of clouds and thick darkness,
a day of trumpet blast and battle cry
against the fortified cities
and against the lofty battlements.
(Zeph. 1:14-16)

Nothing that the people might do at this late hour could avert the coming calamity.

Neither their silver nor their gold
shall be able to deliver them
on the day of the wrath of the Lord.
In the fire of his jealous wrath,
all the earth shall be consumed;
for a full, yea, sudden end
he will make of all the inhabitants of the earth.
(Zeph. 1:18)

The extent of the destruction is indicated still further in these words:

"I will utterly sweep away everything
from the face of the earth," says the Lord,
"I will sweep away man and beast;
I will sweep away the birds of the air
and the fish of the sea.
I will overthrow the wicked;
I will cut off mankind
from the face of the earth," says the Lord.
(Zeph. 1:2-3)

It would be difficult to imagine anything more devastating than the events which Zephaniah describes as the ones which are about to take place. One wonders if this was the only message he had for the people of Judah. Did he not offer them any ray of hope? Did he believe that Yahweh's purpose, so far as the Hebrews were concerned, was forever lost? We do not know the answer to these questions. Our present Book of Zephaniah includes a number of passages which look beyond the events we have described. Some of them indicate a possibility of escape on the part of those who seek meekness and righteousness. Others look forward to a time when Yahweh "will change the speech of the peoples to a pure speech, that all of them may call on the name of the LORD and serve him with one accord." [14] Was Zephaniah responsible for these passages or were they inserted by editors who looked at his writings from the perspective of later events? There is a strong probability that the latter is true. The book as it now stands conforms to the general pattern of prophetic writings in that it opens with an indictment of the Israelite people, and this is followed by an arraignment of the foreign nations after which there appears an account of the final triumph of the Hebrews. We know that in the case of the great prophets this arrangement of materials was the work of later editors and it is not at all improbable that the same was true for Zephaniah.

Regardless of authorship there is a passage in Chapter 3 of Zephaniah which indicates an important development in the religious thinking of the Hebrew people. It has to do with the idea of a "remnant" that will survive the coming catastrophe and form the nucleus of a new state through which the divine purpose will be realized. This mention of a remnant reminds us of the prophet Isaiah who probably furnished the inspiration for the words that are recorded here. But the interesting thing about this remnant is the characterization of the individuals that will be included in it.

> For I will leave in the midst of you
>   a people humble and lowly.
> They shall seek refuge in the name of the LORD,
>   those who are left in Israel;

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[14] Zeph. 3:9.

they shall do no wrong
  and utter no lies,
nor shall there be found in their mouth
  a deceitful tongue.
For they shall pasture and lie down,
  and none shall make them afraid.
(Zeph. 3:12-13)

The poor and the humble are going to constitute the remnant. The mentioning of these qualities marks a new trend in the thinking of Old Testament prophets. It is in the direction of an individualism which reached one of its highest developments in the thinking and writings of Jeremiah. It was a conception of religion in which it was assumed that Yahweh's chief concern was the inner character of individuals rather than the outward conduct of a nation when viewed as a whole. It meant, too, that the qualities which he desires most of all are the ones that belong to a humble and contrite heart. It was a long time before this conception of religion won any wide or general acceptance on the part of the Hebrew people. Perhaps it never did achieve anything like universal popularity. But it is interesting to note that it was at least recognized to some degree by one of the writers who was responsible for our present Book of Zephaniah.

Nahum

Although usually included among the minor prophets of the Old Testament, Nahum was essentially a poet rather than a prophet.[15] He wrote not for the purpose of reforming the people in the face of coming disaster but in order to express his personal delight and satisfaction over the destruction of Israel's enemies. He was a devoutly patriotic soul and the spirit of an intense nationalism finds expression in the poem he wrote celebrating the overthrow of Nineveh, the capital city of the Assyrian empire.

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[15] See John Paterson, *The Goodly Fellowship of the Prophets* (New York: Chas. Scribner's Sons, 1949), pp. 109-15; also R. H. Pfeiffer, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1941), pp. 594-97.

It seems probable that Nahum wrote the poem which forms the nucleus of this little book shortly before the fall of Nineveh in 612 B.C. Although the final capture of the city was still in the future, events leading toward its destruction had been taking place for some time and there was no doubt in the poet's mind that its actual fall was imminent. The spirit of exultation which Nahum felt in view of this approaching event is something that we can readily understand. The Assyrian empire had long been the chief oppressor of the Hebrew people. They had conquered northern Israel and made captives of its inhabitants. They had invaded the southern kingdom and captured a large number of its towns and villages. They had threatened the destruction of Jerusalem and only a sudden and mysterious withdrawal of the Assyrian army had enabled the city to be spared. The cruel and brutal way in which this foreign power had swept over the land was indeed a galling experience for the Hebrew people. No wonder the poet rejoiced when he saw that a death blow was soon to be administered to this wicked power.

The inclusion of the Book of Nahum with the writings of the prophets may be due to the fact that some editor or redactor preserved the original poem along with an acrostic psalm and interpreted the combination as a prediction of Nineveh's destruction. The psalm is now recorded in Chapter 1 and it is probably based on an older arrangement partially reproduced from memory. Some additions to Nahum's poem can be noted in Chapters 2 and 3 but the main characteristics of his work are still in evidence. He describes the attack on the city of Nineveh, enumerates a list of crimes of which Nineveh was guilty, and closes with an account of the destruction itself.

The only note which might be called prophetic in Nahum's poem is the author's deep conviction that Yahweh is not only a just god but a powerful one as well.[16] Since this is true, nations that have engaged in wickedness are surely going to be punished. The Assyrians no less than the Hebrews are subject to Yahweh's principles of justice. Nahum knew that the Assyrians had been guilty of the most sordid crimes. In dealing with the conquered Israelites they had shown no mercy. Neither did they have any regard for the principles of morality. For a long time they had imposed a rule of brutality and force. At long last the time had come for vengeance. The spirit which had inspired the "Song of Deborah" during the early conquest of Canaan was present again in Nahum. He was confident the time had come when Yahweh was about to inflict on the enemy the punishment which they justly deserved.

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[16] Nah. 1:3-8.

> (For the LORD is restoring the majesty of Jacob
> as the majesty of Israel,
> for plunderers have stripped them
> and ruined their branches.)
>
> The shield of his mighty men is red,
> his soldiers are clothed in scarlet.
> The chariots flash like flame
> when mustered in array;
> the chargers prance.
> The chariots rage in the streets,
> they rush to and fro through the squares;
> they gleam like torches,
> they dart like lightning.
> The officers are summoned,
> they stumble as they go,
> they hasten to the wall,
> the mantelet is set up.
> The river gates are opened,
> the palace is in dismay;
> (Nah. 2:2-6)

As Nahum sees it, the fate of the city is a just one, for there is no end to the list of crimes of which the Assyrians have been guilty.

> The lion tore enough for his whelps
> and strangled prey for his lionesses;
> he filled his caves with prey
> and his dens with torn flesh.

> Behold I am against you, says the LORD of hosts, and I will burn your chariots in smoke, and the sword shall devour your young lions; I will cut off your prey from the earth, and the voice of your messengers shall no more be heard. (Nah. 2:12-13)

The confusion and desolation which accompanies the final collapse of the city is vividly portrayed in the following:

Woe to the bloody city,
all full of lies and booty—
no end to the plunder!
The crack of whip, and rumble of wheel,
galloping horse and bounding chariot!
Horsemen charging,
flashing sword and glittering spear,
hosts of slain,
heaps of corpses,
Dead bodies without end—
they stumble over the bodies!
And all for the countless harlotries of the harlot
graceful and of deadly charms,
who betrays nations with her harlotries,
and people with her charms.

Behold I am against you,
says the Lord of hosts,
and will lift up your skirts over your face;
and I will let nations look on your nakedness
and kingdoms on your shame.
I will throw filth at you
and treat you with contempt,
and make you a gazingstock.
And all who look on you will shrink from you and say,
Wasted is Nineveh; who will bemoan her?
whence shall I seek comforters for her?
(Nah. 3:1-7)

Habakkuk

The fall of the city of Nineveh seems to have furnished the immediate occasion for at least a portion of the Book of Habakkuk. This book, like that of Nahum, is evidently a composite work which includes a poem or prayer that was originally separate from the series of oracles that have now been included with it. Nothing is known of the personality of Habakkuk and we do not know whether he was the author of all that is contained in the book. Presumably, the arrangement of the parts, together with a few brief additions to the original material, was the work of an editor or redactor. The question of authorship is not especially important so far as this book is concerned. The real significance of Habakkuk lies in the question it raises concerning the justice of Yahweh in view of the fact that suffering and affliction are frequently the lot of the righteous or of innocent persons as well as it is of the ones who have lived wickedly. The question which naturally arises is, "Why does Yahweh permit this unfair distribution of suffering?"

The rise of the Chaldeans to a position of power where they could inflict punishment on the wicked Assyrians may have been sufficient to satisfy Nahum's sense of justice in the world. But it required something more than that to explain to Habakkuk why the innocent people living in Judah should be forced to endure hardship and privations at the hands of both the Assyrian overlords and their own rulers. For that matter it didn't seem to help very much to have the Assyrians conquered by the Chaldeans, for the Chaldeans were as cruel and oppressive as their predecessors had been. As long as the Hebrews were at their mercy they could expect little in the way of relief from their suffering.

The problem which Habakkuk raises is a central one in any philosophical or religious view of the world. It is a problem which would not arise among people who have no belief in God, or who do not recognize the existence of moral principles as having something to do with the running of the universe. But the Hebrews did believe in Yahweh and, furthermore, they identified his existence, at least in part, with the reign of justice in the world. It was Yahweh who saw to it that the fate of nations would be exactly what each deserved. Why then did he permit wickedness to go unpunished or allow the righteous to suffer as they have so often been forced to do? This question constitutes one of the most difficult problems that religious persons have ever had to face. Attempts to deal with it have produced some of the most profound thinking the world has ever known.[17] Habakkuk may not have succeeded in finding an entirely satisfactory solution for the problem but we can be grateful to him for bringing the problem to light more clearly than had been done by any of his predecessors.

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[17] The most profound discussion of this problem in the Old Testament is found in the Book of Job. Deutero-Isaiah deals with it in the poems of the

The background for the Book of Habakkuk is to be found in those conditions which prevailed in Jerusalem during the reign of King Jehoiakim.[18] It will be remembered that his father, King Josiah, had been killed at the battle of Megiddo. Another of Josiah's sons, Jehoahaz, had been taken captive to Egypt. Jehoiakim was then placed on the throne of Judah because he was a willing tool for carrying out the wishes of the foreign power responsible for putting him there. When the Egyptians were later defeated by the Chaldeans, the Hebrew king quickly changed his allegiance to the victorious power and proceeded to carry out whatever demands were made upon him. The Chaldeans were ruthless in their dealings with the Hebrew people, and Jehoiakim did not hesitate to use any means at his disposal for extracting from his subjects all that was asked. If the king and the members of his court had been willing to share the hardships with their people the situation would not have been so bad. As it was Jehoiakim insisted on a life of ease and luxury for himself. He demanded a splendid royal palace for his own living and he obtained the money for it by adding to the tax burdens, already too heavy by reason of the tribute which he was paying to a foreign power.[19] It was the cruelty and injustice of the reign of Jehoiakim that caused Habakkuk to wonder how long a wicked and corrupt regime would continue to exploit innocent people without some interference on the part of Yahweh. If conditions of this type could exist permanently what advantage would there be in the worship of Yahweh? For that matter why should anyone believe in him at all?

> O Lord, how long shall I cry for help,
> and thou wilt not hear?

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suffering servant. Indeed it is one of the central themes in all of the great literature of philosophy and religion.

[18] For a brief discussion of the historical background of this period see Julius A. Bewer, *The Literature of the Old Testament* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1924), pp. 140-42.

[19] Jer. 22:13-18.

Or cry to thee "Violence!"
and thou wilt not save?
Why dost thou make me see wrongs
and look upon trouble?
Destruction and violence are before me;
strife and contention arise.
So the law is slacked
and justice never goes forth.
For the wicked surround the righteous,
so justice goes forth perverted.
(Hab. 1:2-4)

The rise of the Chaldeans was interpreted as an effort on the part of Yahweh to set things right. However, the situation was still as bad as it had been before the fall of Nineveh. The Chaldeans were wicked and Jehoiakim was a tool in their hands. The innocent men and women of Judah were exploited while unscrupulous rulers were enjoying power and prosperity. Their conduct is described by the prophet in the following words:

Woe to him who gets evil gain for his house,
to set his nest on high,
to be safe from the reach of harm!

. . .

Woe to him who builds a town with blood,
and founds a city on iniquity!
(Hab. 2:9, 12)

Although the prophet was deeply disturbed by the turn of events he did not give up his faith in Yahweh. He was confident that a satisfactory solution could be found for his problem if only Yahweh would reveal it to him. It was in this spirit that he prayed earnestly for enlightenment. His prayer consisted chiefly of a series of questions.[20] He wanted to know whether wicked rulers could go on murdering people endlessly. Why does Yahweh seem to tolerate robbery and do nothing about it when godless people are devouring the ones who are good? Habakkuk not only asks these questions but he waits for an answer. He stands upon his watchtower and waits for

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[20] The prayer of Habakkuk is recorded in Chapter 3 although the answer which he received is in Chapter 2.

Yahweh to give an answer to his complaint. He is given an assurance that the answer will be forthcoming. He may not receive it at once, but if there is a delay, he must wait for it. The answer will surely come.

Habakkuk did not receive a full and complete answer to the problem of suffering but he did gain something of an insight into its meaning so far as the experiences of the righteous are concerned. What Yahweh said to him was "the righteous shall live by his faith." [21] This was enough to reassure the prophet that the course of justice and righteousness was the only one for individuals to follow no matter what the external consequences might be. Faith in the ultimate triumph of goodness makes for great living even if it doesn't enable one to escape suffering and hardship. One may believe that justice will triumph in the end in spite of the fact that its demands are not being met at the present time. Faith of this kind is something more than an intellectual acceptance of a particular belief. It is something that grips the feelings and emotions and thus leads to action. It means that the significance of one's life is determined by the cause that he serves and hence to be on the side of justice and righteousness is the only way to acquire permanent values. It was this conception of a faith which makes for great and noble living that inspired the work of the Apostle Paul.[22] It was likewise Habakkuk's portrayal of faith which led Luther to inaugurate the work of the Protestant Reformation. It was the prophet's greatest contribution to the development of Israel's religious ideals.

Obadiah

The Book of Obadiah is the least significant of the writings attributed to the Old Testament prophets. It is a very short book consisting of only one chapter of twenty-one verses and not all of these can be assigned to the prophet for whom the book is named. The theme of the book is a denunciation of the Edomites and this is accompanied with a prediction of their overthrow. The day of Yahweh is coming for them and it will be a day of vengeance in which they will receive due punishment for the evils they have committed.

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[21] Hab. 2:4.

[22] See Rom. 1:17.

To understand the background from which this little book was written one must take into account the relationship which had long existed between the Hebrews and the Edomites. According to the Hebrew tradition they had both descended from a common ancestry. Jacob and Esau were the two sons of Isaac. They had struggled against one another in the mother's womb before they were born.[23] While living at home they frequently plotted against each other, and on more than one occasion there was open conflict between them. The descendants of Jacob were the Israelites and the descendants of Esau were the Edomites. The strife between their respective ancestors had been continued by the two groups through the intervening years. In fact it is quite possible that it was the enmity which had developed between these two countries during the later centuries that is reflected in the traditions concerning their common origins. The continuance of this conflict between Hebrews and Edomites is further illustrated by the story of Israel's journey through the wilderness toward the Promised Land. According to this account the shortest and easiest route for the Israelites to take was through the land of the Edomites. But the Edomites would not grant them permission to cross their territory, so they were forced to take a longer and more difficult route. Later, when the Hebrews had become well established in their own land, the geographical location of the two countries led to trade rivalries. Naturally, this did not improve the relationship which had existed for a long time, but the climax of this feud between them came when the Babylonians invaded Palestine and captured the city of Jerusalem. It was then that the Edomites lent their support to the invaders and helped to bring about the destruction of the city. It was this act on the part of the Edomites of aiding the enemies of the Hebrew people that drew forth some of the most bitter denunciations recorded in the Old Testament. One of these is found in Psalm 137:7-9:

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[23] This is one of the many instances in the Old Testament in which recent events are made to appear as the fulfilment of a prediction which was given centuries before the event occurred.

Remember, O Lord, against the Edomites
the day of Jerusalem,
how they said, "Rase it, rase it!
Down to its foundations!"
O daughter of Babylon, you devastator!
Happy shall he be who requites you
with what you have done to us!
Happy shall he be who takes your little ones
and dashes them against the rock!

It was in the same spirit that Obadiah made his prediction of the punishment which Yahweh would eventually bring on the Edomites.

And your mighty men shall be dismayed, O Teman,
so that every man from Mount Esau will be cut off by slaughter.
For the violence done to your brother Jacob,
shame shall cover you,
and you shall be cut off for ever.
(Obad. 1:9-10)

Although Obadiah's message is filled with bitterness and seems to be the expression of a vindictive spirit, we should bear in mind that he was thinking about something more than the age-long conflict between two countries. Edom was a symbol of that proud and haughty spirit which trusts in itself and has no regard for the moral and spiritual principles in which the Hebrew prophets had placed their hope. In the light of this fact we can understand how it would have been impossible for Obadiah or any other loyal Hebrew to think for a moment that a nation which followed the way of life exemplified by the Edomites could permanently survive.[24]

Haggai

The Babylonian captivity was one of the most difficult experiences that ever came to the Hebrew people. In addition to the physical hardships they were forced to endure, there was the matter of reconciling their faith with the events which had fallen on them as a nation. It was true, as they all knew, that Israel had not lived up to the best light she had received and for this reason they were deserving of some punishment. But why should the punishment be so long and so severe? Why should the Hebrews be the captives of a cruel and barbarous power that did not even recognize the existence of Yahweh or pay any attention to the principles of justice? Because they could find no satisfactory answer to these questions, some of the captives gave up their faith and turned to the gods of Babylon. But the majority of them did not do that. Inspired by the teachings of Ezekiel and Deutero-Isaiah they remained faithful to their religious heritage and looked forward to the time when their captivity would be at an end. Yahweh would then lead them back to their own land and make of them the greatest nation in the world. At last the day came when Cyrus, the Persian king, granted to the Hebrew people permission to return to their homeland. It was an event to which they had looked forward with eager anticipation for a long period of time. The prophets had promised as much, declaring that Yahweh would go before them preparing the way and making smooth all of the rough places. But when the time came for them to return to Palestine the events which followed were not so glorious as they had hoped. In the first place, it was only a comparatively small number who wanted to go back. Many of the captives had become adjusted to their Babylonian environment and they had no desire to undertake the hardships that would be involved in a rebuilding of the homeland. Those persons who did go back found conditions in a deplorable state. Buildings were in a state of ruin, the land had not been properly cultivated, and the people who remained after the Babylonian conquest had become careless and indifferent toward the requirements of the Hebrew religion. Many of the Jews had intermarried with foreigners and they no longer observed the rites and ceremonies peculiar to the Jewish faith.

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[24] The same attitude is well-illustrated at the present time when one nation declares war against another.

In spite of the many obstacles which faced them, the returned exiles put forth strenuous efforts to restore the land and rebuild what had been destroyed. It was not an easy task. They suffered from drouth and were forced to endure many privations.

To make matters worse they were frequently attacked by neighboring tribes. Altogether the situation was very discouraging. Why didn't Yahweh come to their aid and give them the peace and prosperity which they had so confidently expected? Why had Yahweh failed to return with them to Jerusalem? Was he still displeased with their conduct? Had he cast them off completely so there was no longer any hope for them? If there was still some opportunity left for them, what ought they to do in order to secure the divine favor?

It was in response to these questions that Haggai delivered his message. He was not a great prophet. He did not possess the moral fervor or the spiritual insight of a man like Isaiah.[25] Neither did he have the vision of a Jeremiah or a Deutero-Isaiah. However, he did succeed in arousing the religious enthusiasm of his countrymen to the point where they were willing to do something to improve their relationship with Yahweh. Haggai told them to rebuild the temple. It had been in ruins since the Babylonian conquest of Jerusalem. Here, then, was to be found the explanation for those hardships and privations which the people had been suffering. Yahweh could not dwell in their midst and pour out his blessings upon them because they had not provided a suitable house in which he might dwell and wherein he could be worshiped. The returned exiles had been so busy with the task of building homes for themselves that they had given little attention to the building of a temple for Yahweh. The ruins of the former temple had been allowed to remain and this was a reproach to the entire nation.

> "Thus says the Lord of hosts: Consider how you have fared. Go up to the hills and bring wood and build the house, that I may take pleasure in it and that I may appear in my glory, says the Lord. You have looked for much, and, lo, it came to little; and when you brought it home, I blew it away. Why? says the Lord of hosts. Because of my house that lies in ruins, while you busy yourselves each with his own house. Therefore the heavens above you have withheld the dew, and the earth has withheld its produce." (Hag. 1:7-10)

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[25] His attitude toward foreign nations is illustrated in his refusal of the Samaritans' help in rebuilding the temple lest they defile the place.

The prophet's message produced important results. Under the leadership of Zerubbabel, the governor of Judah, the people set to work and in a comparatively short time the building was finished and the people assembled to worship in it. It was true that the building could scarcely be compared to the more magnificent one built by Solomon but it was the best they could do. Yahweh accepted it and promised to fill the house with his glory. Since Yahweh was the one to whom the land, including the silver and gold and other treasures really belonged, his worshipers could expect from him both security and material prosperity.

> 'The latter splendor of this house shall be greater than the former, says the LORD of hosts; and in this place I will give prosperity, says the LORD of hosts.' (Hag. 2:9)

Zechariah

About two months after Haggai began his work, he was joined by Zechariah who added his support to the call for repentance and reformation. But Zechariah did not share the enthusiasm which his fellow-prophet had displayed for the building of a temple in order that the ritualistic side of religion could be carried on more successfully. He was more interested in a moral reformation of the type which had been proclaimed by the earlier prophets. He believed that Yahweh could dwell in human hearts and this was more important than having a temple in which to reside. He believed, too, that it would require something more than a temple building to insure Yahweh's protection or to bring about the fulfilment of his people's messianic hopes. The foreign nations would have to be destroyed and the people of Judah would have to be purged of all those iniquitous practices that were offensive to Yahweh. These objectives would never be brought about through the action of the people themselves. Yahweh would have to intervene in their behalf. This he would do whenever the proper time arrived. In the meantime the people should prepare themselves for the event by eliminating evil practices from their midst. The spiritual character of his message is indicated in the words spoken to Zerubbabel concerning the building of the new state, "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the LORD of hosts." (Zech. 4:6)

Only the first eight chapters of the Book of Zechariah can be attributed to the prophet. The other six chapters constitute a later addition. Zechariah is, in some respects, a forerunner of the apocalyptic writers. His message is in the form of visions and the objects which are revealed in these symbolize events that are to take place in the near future. The visions occur on a single night in February of the year 519 B.C.

In the first vision the prophet sees a heavenly patrol guard. This guard has been traversing the earth after which he makes a report to the angel of Yahweh. The angel voices the disappointment of the Hebrew people because the cities of Judah have been in such deep distress for a long period of time. Yahweh replies with a comforting message which promises,

> 'My cities shall again overflow with prosperity, and the LORD will again comfort Zion and again choose Jerusalem.' (Zech. 1:17)

In the second vision Zechariah sees four horns and four smiths.[26] The horns symbolize the nations that are regarded as the enemies of the people of Judah. The smiths are the executioners of these nations. They act under the direction of Yahweh who is certain to bring punishment on these nations as a prelude to the establishment of a great state for his own people.

The third vision portrays a surveyor who is measuring the land where the temple is to be rebuilt.[27] Jerusalem is not to be fortified through the building of material walls. It is quite probable that the Persian government under whose jurisdiction the Jewish colony was living would not have permitted fortifications anyway. But the reason advanced by the prophet is that Yahweh's presence among his people is sufficient to afford them all the protection that is needed.[28] Zechariah foresaw a glorious future for the inhabitants of Jerusalem. The small number of people, most of whom were poor, did not present a strong appearance, even though they constituted the bulk of the inhabitants belonging to the city. The prophet believed their numbers would

[26] Zech. 1:18-21.
[27] Zech. 2:1-5.
[28] Zech. 2:10-12.

be increased as more of the exiles would return to the homeland. He called upon the Jews who were still living in the north to return once more to the home of their fathers. He also indicated that when they returned they would bring with them the wealth of the Gentile nations under whose power they had been oppressed. No one would be able to hinder their movements for it was of Yahweh's concern for these exiles that Zechariah spoke: "for he who touches you touches the apple of his eye." [29]

Zechariah's fourth vision contains two items that are of special interest. One of these is the introduction of the character known as Satan.[30] He is not presented as the being who stands at the head of all evil forces in the world or one who is trying to overthrow the work of Yahweh. On the contrary, he is one whose function it is to spy on the activities of human beings and report their shortcomings to Yahweh. In this vision Satan is accusing the people of Jerusalem. Joshua, the high priest of the Jewish colony, stands before the angel of Yahweh in soiled clothes which symbolize the charges brought against his people. The angel refuses to listen to the accusations. He insists that these returned exiles are "a brand plucked from the fire." [31] They have endured great hardships and Yahweh looks upon them with kindness and mercy. He orders the soiled garments removed from Joshua and clean ones put upon him, thus symbolizing the fact that the sins of the people have been forgiven. The second special item in this vision refers to the work of restoration which evidently had been halted because of the opposition the Jews had experienced at the hands of their unfriendly neighbors. The prophet is sure that the work is to go forward. Its completion in the near future is signified when the angel places before Joshua the stone which will be used to complete the building of the temple. It is important to note also the manner in which the work will be finished. It is not to be accomplished by military might as some of Zechariah's contemporaries seemed to think, but by the presence of the right attitude on the part of the people themselves. It is in this connection that we find the noblest statement contained in Zechariah's book, "This is the word of the Lord to Zerubbabel: Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the Lord of hosts." (Zech. 4:6)

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[29] Zech. 2:8.
[30] Zech. 3:1-2.
[31] Zech. 3:2.

In the fifth vision the prophet sees a golden candlestick with seven lamps and beside it two olive trees. The lamps represent the eyes of Yahweh which run to and fro throughout the entire earth. The two olive trees symbolize the respective heads of the spiritual and the political life of the nation. The sixth vision portrays a flying scroll on which is written a terrible curse that will bring destruction to the thieves and perjurers among the people. In the seventh vision the prophet saw a woman thrust into a large container which was closed with a leaden lid and carried off to Babylonia. The meaning of this vision is that Yahweh cannot tolerate wickedness in the restored state. The very principle of wickedness must be excluded from the entire community. In the eighth vision the prophet saw a heavenly patrol guard going forth in the interests of the new state. He visits the Jewish exiles in the north and awakens their interest in the homeland. Further evidence of Yahweh's work in behalf of these people is seen in Zechariah's command to visit the home of Joshua and there receive the gold and silver brought by the returning exiles. From this metal he makes a crown and places it on the head of Zerubbabel, thus symbolizing his conviction that the man will shortly be made king. This hope on the part of the prophet was never realized, for the Persians did not appoint any more governors of Judah. The high priest became the head of the government as well as the religious leader of the people.

From this record of visions we can see that Zechariah's major interest was in the work of restoring the Jewish community. The method he used for the presentation of his message was similar to the forms employed by the apocalyptic writers of a later period. In fact we may think of this prophet as one of the forerunners of the apocalyptists. Like them he did not want his people to become discouraged or to lose faith in Yahweh's power to do for them all that they had hoped. Although Zechariah recognized the importance of the ritualistic side of religion he did not fail to stress the greater significance of matters pertaining to the inner spirit. He believed Yahweh desired social justice and it was for this end that the temple and its services existed.

Malachi

The period following the preaching of Haggai and Zechariah was, in many respects, a disappointing one. In spite of the rebuilding of the temple and the inauguration of religious reforms the prosperity which had been anticipated did not arrive. The people were still plagued with drouth, and economic conditions in general were far from satisfactory. The maintenance of the temple with all its services was expensive and the burden of taxation seemed in many instances too heavy for the people to bear. Under these conditions there was a strong temptation for individuals to withhold their tithes or to offer inferior animals for sacrifice. Unscrupulous persons would take advantage of the weaker members of their society, thereby enriching themselves through fraudulent practices. Laborers were frequently exploited by their employers. Widows, orphans, and other defenseless persons were oppressed by those who were in positions of power. Laxity with regard to marriage vows was common and intermarriages with foreigners were becoming more and more frequent. Altogether the situation was quite discouraging. Religious faith was being put to a severe test. Many doubted the justice of Yahweh and others were wondering if anything was to be gained through loyalty to him. These conditions form the background for the work of another prophet who appeared during the first half of the fourth century not far from the year 460 B.C.

We do not know the name of this prophet, for the word "Malachi" means "my messenger" and its use as a proper noun was due to an erroneous interpretation of one of the passages in which it was assumed that the prophet was speaking concerning himself.[32] What his real name was does not matter so long as we have in mind the author of those oracles that have been attributed to him. His main task was to strengthen the faith of his people in the power and goodness of Yahweh but he also had in mind the correction of those abuses that had robbed the temple worship of its dignity. In addition to these purposes, he wanted to put an end to mixed marriages and to express his disapproval of the increasing number of divorces.

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[32] Mal. 3:1.

The Book of Malachi begins with an assertion of Yahweh's love for the people of Israel. It is a strange argument that he uses in support of his claim. As evidence of Yahweh's love for Israel he points to the terrible catastrophe that has fallen on the Edomites. It is true that the Israelites have been through some trying experiences but when one compares their lot with the worse one which has overtaken the Edomites it becomes evident that Yahweh has loved Jacob but hated Esau. Furthermore, Yahweh's preference for the Israelites will be seen again in the fact that the Edomites will not be able to achieve a restoration as the descendants of Jacob have done. Yahweh will bring frustration to all efforts directed toward recovery. Following this introduction the prophet proceeds with a series of oracles that are directed against the sins of both priests and laymen. After these oracles there is a promise of material prosperity for those who will make the necessary reforms and the book closes with a warning concerning events which are soon to take place.

The priests are taken to task because they have offered inferior sacrifices. They have permitted the people to bring animals that were blind, lame, or defective in some other respect and these have been accepted as an offering to Yahweh. They would be ashamed to present such gifts to the governor and it is even less appropriate to offer them to Yahweh.

> "A son honors his father, and a servant his master. If then I am a father, where is my honor? And if I am a master, where is my fear? says the LORD of hosts to you, O priests, who despise my name. You say, 'How have we despised thy name?' By offering polluted food upon my altar." (Mal. 1:6-7)

Because of the careless manner in which the worship has been conducted, Yahweh will not accept their offerings nor will he pour out his blessings upon them. Among the heathen there are those who have greater respect for him than do the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

> "Oh, that there were one among you who would shut the doors, that you might not kindle fire upon my altar in vain! I have no pleasure in you, says the LORD of hosts, and I will not accept an offering from your hand. For from the rising of the sun to its setting my name is great among the nations, and in every place incense is offered to my name, and a pure offering; for my name is great among the nations, says the LORD of hosts." (Mal. 1:10-11)

Although the older translations would indicate that the recognition of Yahweh's greatness on the part of the Gentiles was something to be realized in the future, more recent translators use the present tense which means that Malachi believed it was a fact at the time when he delivered his message. If this interpretation is correct, we have here an illustration of broad-minded tolerance which goes beyond the views expressed by the majority of the prophets.

The priests are the ones who must bear the greater responsibility for the unhappy plight in which the Israelites find themselves but they are not the only ones who are at fault. Laymen as well as priests are guilty. The prophet denounces them for their dishonesty in regard to tithes and offerings. It is the fact that they have been robbing God which furnishes the explanation for many of the hardships which they have had to endure. Let the people reform along these lines and see if Yahweh will not shower material prosperity upon them.

> "From the days of your fathers you have turned aside from my statutes and have not kept them. Return to me, and I will return to you, says the LORD of hosts. But you say, 'How shall we return?, Will man rob God? Yet you are robbing me. But you say, 'How are we robbing thee?' In your tithes and offerings. You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing me; the whole nation of you. Bring the full tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house; and thereby put me to the test, says the LORD of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you an overflowing blessing. I will rebuke the devourer for you, so that it will not destroy the fruits of your

> soil; and your vine in the field shall not fail to bear, says the LORD of hosts." (Mal. 3:7-11)

In regard to divorce and intermarriage with foreigners the prophet added another message of rebuke. Whether he had in mind the returned exiles or the people who had remained in Palestine during the captivity we do not know. We learn from the books of Ezra and Nehemiah that intermarriage with foreigners was one of the serious problems which confronted those who were trying to rebuild the Jewish state. It was responsible in no small degree for the laxity which prevailed regarding the requirements of the Jewish faith. Because he believed stern measures should be taken against such marriages, Nehemiah ruled that no one who married a foreigner could remain in the city. He even went so far as to insist that those who had already married foreigners should obtain divorces or else leave the community entirely. The enforcement of this rule caused many homes to be broken and it is easy to understand the reaction which resulted. Whether it was this situation that Malachi had in mind or the general failure on the part of the people to recognize the sanctity of the marriage relation we cannot be sure. At any rate his voice was raised in support of the idea that the relationship between husband and wife should be a permanent one similar to the covenant relationship between Yahweh and his people.

> Has not the one God made and sustained for us the Spirit of life? And what does he desire? Godly offspring. So take heed to yourselves, and let none be faithless to the wife of his youth. "For I hate divorce, says the LORD the God of Israel, and covering one's garment with violence, says the LORD of hosts . . ." (Mal. 2:15-16)

Joel

Nothing is known of the life or personality of the prophet Joel. Neither is there agreement among Old Testament scholars concerning the date of his ministry. Some have placed it as early as the reign of Josiah and others as late as the period which followed the restoration under Nehemiah. The general consensus at the present time would favor the later date since the conditions described in the book seem to coincide with the ones which prevailed during the post-Exilic period. Further evidence for this date can be seen in the fact that the author of the Book of Joel quotes from the earlier prophets including Malachi and does not refer to events which preceded the Babylonian captivity.

The immediate occasion for the prophecies of this book was the invasion of Judah by a horde of locusts. It was one of the worst disasters suffered by the Jews since the return from Babylon. One attack followed another until nothing was left in the fields to provide food for the people or their animals. Provisions had been reduced by earlier years of drouth and now the complete devastation of crops by these huge swarms of locusts brought the entire colony to the verge of ruin. Even the meal-offerings and the drink-offerings which formed a part of the ritual performed in the temple had to cease because there was nothing left to be used in these services. For the same reason the daily offering of sacrifices could not be continued. For Joel this was a fact of the deepest significance. If the services of the temple could not be performed in accordance with the instructions that had been given to the priests, it would be impossible for Yahweh to maintain a union with his people.

Like most of the other prophets Joel did not believe that physical disasters were unrelated to the moral experiences of the people. If Judah had been visited by drouth and armies of locusts it must be that the nation was being punished for its sins. Accordingly, Joel takes this opportunity of issuing a call to repentance. The people must humble themselves, confess their shortcomings and ask for Yahweh's forgiveness. It must be something more than an expression of grief because of the disasters that have befallen them. It must represent a real change of heart.

"Yet even now," says the LORD,
  "return to me with all your heart,
with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning;
  and rend your hearts and not your garments."

Return to the Lord, your God,
  for he is gracious and merciful,
slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love,
  and repents of evil."
(Joel 2:12-13)

Joel was confident that the people to whom he delivered this message would repent. Israel was still Yahweh's chosen people and in the end they must be triumphant while their enemies are brought low or completely destroyed. All of this would take place in connection with the coming of the great day of Yahweh. The prophet's vision concerning the future resembles in many respects the ideas that are set forth in the latter part of the Book of Ezekiel. The foreign nations are going to be punished for the oppression which they have inflicted upon the people of Israel. Yahweh will bring them to the valley of Jehoshaphat and there he will rain destruction upon them.

Let the nations bestir themselves,
  and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat;
for there I will sit to judge
  all the nations round about.

Put in the sickle,
  for the harvest is ripe.
Go in, tread,
  for the wine press is full.
The vats overflow,
  for their wickedness is great.

. . .

The sun and the moon are darkened,
  and the stars withdraw their shining.
(Joel 3:12-13, 15)

Whether Joel was the author of the entire book, or parts of it were added by later writers we do not know. At any rate the idea is set forth that Yahweh will respond to repentance and confession on the part of the Israelites. He will not only make them secure in their own land but he will restore what they have lost through drouth and the invasion of the locusts.

“I will restore to you the years
which the swarming locust has eaten,
the hopper, the destroyer, and the cutter,
my great army which I sent among you.

You shall eat in plenty and be satisfied,
and praise the name of the Lord your God,
who has dealt wondrously with you.
And my people shall never again be put to shame.”
(Joel 2:25-26)

Chapter 14

THE LAW CODES

The concept of divine law is an especially important one in the literature of the Old Testament. While the Jewish sacred writings were divided into three parts known respectively as the law, the prophets, and the writings, it was the first of these, or what came to be known as the Book of the Law, that took precedence over the other two groups. The law was regarded not only as the most important but as the most inspired of all the Old Testament writings. It was because of the Hebrews' veneration for the law and their understanding of their responsibility in connection with it that the Jewish religion has frequently been characterized as legalistic. Yahweh was conceived as a judge and as a lawgiver. The standard of judgment was obedience to the commands which he had given. Those who measured up to this standard would be rewarded with security and prosperity while those who fell short of it were bound to be punished.

It is true that some of the writers of the Old Testament did not accept this legalistic interpretation of religion. Jeremiah, for example, was one of the prophets who protested against it although in his earlier years he had given his support to it. There were other writers, too, who shared the conviction of Jeremiah's later years. But they were only a small minority. As a general rule the leaders and teachers of the Jewish people were legalists in their point of view. This was especially true in the post-Exilic period which was characterized by an increasing emphasis upon the ritualistic demands of the law.

The law, it was believed, had been revealed to the Hebrew people through Moses and the prophets. The revelation had not occurred all at once for new laws were constantly being added as new situations would arise. Nevertheless, any of the laws, once they had been given, were binding upon the people for all time to come. Yahweh's laws were eternal and no human being had any authority to set them aside. It might seem at first that this conception of divine law would make it impossible for any progress to be achieved either in the realm of human relations or in the service which would be rendered to the deity. But this consequence did not follow in the experience of the Hebrew people. As their understanding of the divine will changed from time to time they were always adding new laws which reflected the latest developments in their thinking. Some of these laws would appear to be in direct conflict with the older ones which they had recognized. But instead of declaring that the old laws were no longer binding, the Hebrews explained matters in another way. They retained the older laws but reinterpreted them in a manner which would bring them into harmony with the new additions.[1] This procedure made it possible for them to develop in their understanding of divine law and at the same time to retain the idea that it was really Yahweh who had given the laws to them.

A complete account of all of the laws of the Old Testament would not only require a considerable amount of space but it would involve a description of those conditions which prevailed during many periods of Hebrew history. To present all of this material would carry us beyond the purpose of the present chapter.[2] Instead, we shall confine our attention to a brief account of those particular codes which may be said to mark the high points in the development of the Hebrew conception of law. Since we have described in an earlier chapter the laws that were included in the Book of the Covenant we will make only a few brief comments with reference to this early code of laws. More attention will be given to the body of laws which are included in our present Book of Deuteronomy. This is probably the most important single collection of laws to be found in the entire Old Testament. Its first public appearance was in the year 621 B.C. It was discovered in the temple at Jerusalem by workmen whom King Josiah had employed for a renovation of the building. The book contained the law of Yahweh as it was understood at that time by a group of disciples who had been under the influence of the teachings of the eighth-century prophets. It was this body of laws that provided the standard by which the Jewish nation was governed until the time of the Babylonian exile. The next important step in the development of Hebrew law came with the introduction of the Holiness Code, now recorded in Chapters 17 to 26 of the Book of Leviticus.[3] This code of laws derives its name from the fact that holiness is the dominant idea expressed in this group of regulations. The idea of holiness as it is used here seems to have been derived from the teachings of Ezekiel.[4]

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[1] An interesting example of this procedure can be seen in the application of the law concerning the treatment to be used on a rebellious son. According to Deut. 21:18-21 he was to be stoned to death. This was a very cruel and barbarous law. During the later centuries of Judaism it was never actually enforced. Those who interpreted the law kept narrowing the period of time to which it was applicable. According to the law it was only the rebellious son who was to be treated in this manner. It did not apply to a youth or to a man and the offending person could usually claim an exemption by being one or the other of these two. Thus it was possible to retain the letter of the law without ever having an occasion when it would be used.

[2] For a rather full account of the development of Hebrew law see Charles F. Kent, *The Growth and Contents of the Old Testament* (New York: Chas. Scribner's Sons, 1926), pp. 159-206.

For this reason the authorship of the code has usually been attributed to one or more of his disciples. The last important body of laws to be included in the Old Testament is known as the Priestly Code. It forms a part of the historical narrative which begins with the story of creation and traces the high points in Israel's history down to the establishment of the monarchy under King Saul. Although the laws which belong to this code have a relatively late origin, they are projected back into the distant past thus giving to them the authority and prestige of ancient tradition.

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[3] The Holiness Code was in time incorporated as a part of the Priestly Code.

[4] Some critics have attributed this code to Ezekiel but it is generally held to be the work of one of his disciples. For a discussion of the problem concerning authorship of this code see R. H. Pfeiffer, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1941), pp. 239-49.

The Book of the Covenant[5]

The beginnings of Hebrew law are not entirely clear from the records which have been preserved in the Old Testament. If the oldest codes had been preserved in their original form, it would be a comparatively easy task to reconstruct the story of their development. But they were not recorded that way. Our information of the earliest law codes must be gained from documents written a long time after these laws had first been given to the people. By this time many additions had been made to the original legislation, and the laws were viewed from the perspective of later generations.

According to ancient tradition, the earliest code of laws was given to the Hebrew people by Moses.[6] That there is some historical basis for this tradition can scarcely be doubted, but we cannot be sure as to the content of the particular laws which he gave. Neither do we know with certainty the extent to which Hebrew laws were derived from the customs and practices of other peoples with whom they were associated. It is quite possible that the Babylonian Code of Hammurabi may have served as a model for a later code which was attributed to Moses.[7] If some of the early laws of the Hebrews can be traced to the influence of the Babylonians, it is not unreasonable to suppose that others were influenced by the Egyptians and the Canaanites.

The laws included in the Book of the Covenant, now recorded in Exod. 20:22-23:19, make it one of the oldest codes in the Old Testament. Often its close resemblance to the Babylonian code would lead us to think that many of its provisions were in existence long before the time of Moses. However, it seems quite probable that Moses did have something to do with the reformulation of its principles and its adaptation to the needs of the Hebrew people. It was Moses who gave to his people the idea of a covenant relationship between Yahweh and Israel and for this reason it seems quite proper to associate his name with the laws contained in this code. This does not imply that the Book of the Covenant was finished or brought into its present form by Moses. We know that his work as lawgiver was continued long after his death, and the fact that the code contains many regulations which pertain to an agricultural type of life suggests strongly that these were added after the settlement in Canaan. They were probably taken over, at least in part, from the customs which had been observed among the older inhabitants of the land.

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[5] The term "Book of the Covenant" has been used to refer to more than one specific code of laws. In fact it has sometimes been applied to the entire Old Testament. It is here used in a somewhat restricted sense as applying to the early code of laws now included in the Book of Exodus.

[6] For a discussion of the life and work of Moses see Fleming James, *Personalities of the Old Testament* (New York: Chas. Scribner's Sons, 1939), chap. i.

[7] See Charles F. Kent, *op. cit.*, pp. 159-64.

The laws included in this code have been discussed in an earlier chapter.[8] They have to do with the personal rights of individuals, theft, and damage to another person's property, the administration of justice, and the performance of religious duties. They reflect the early conceptions of right and wrong which prevailed during the period of the monarchy down to the times of the eighth-century prophets.

The Deuteronomic Code

The century which saw the preaching of Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, and Micah stands in the background of the legislation that is recorded in the Book of Deuteronomy. These prophets of social righteousness had condemned, in the name of Yahweh, the economic injustices and hollow forms of worship which prevailed in the kingdoms of Israel and Judah. They denounced the system of land tenure which made it possible for a small class to own most of the land while it cruelly exploited those unfortunate individuals who had lost their possessions and who owned practically nothing at all.[9] They criticized the judicial system which permitted favoritism to some but only at the expense of the welfare of others.[10] They deplored the foreign policies of the rulers and they protested against those religious practices which placed a higher value on ritualistic observances than upon moral conduct.[11] In brief, they were calling for a moral reformation which, in their judgment, was the only way they could express a genuine loyalty to Yahweh or save their own people from destruction.

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[8] See Chapter 3.

[9] Amos 6:1-6; Isa. 5:8; Mic. 2:6-11.

[10] Amos 5:12.

In spite of the opposition which these prophets were forced to meet from the time when they began their preaching, some people were convinced that what they were saying was true. While we have no evidence that Amos and Hosea gained a very large following in northern Israel, we do know that Isaiah's ministry was effective during the last years of the reign of Hezekiah. Many reforms were enacted and the king seems to have made an honest attempt to follow the leadership which the prophet had given. Then came the death of King Hezekiah. He was succeeded by his son Manasseh who was not at all friendly toward Isaiah or the prophetic movement in general. Being under the influence of a strong party which was opposed to the new reform measures, he began a counter-reformation which culminated in a vigorous persecution of the prophets. Isaiah, according to one tradition,[12] was sawed asunder and many of the disciples of the four great prophets were either put to death or forced to flee from Jerusalem to save their lives.

Great ideas do not perish because the men who hold them are persecuted. These disciples who were devoted to prophetic teaching wondered what they might do to preserve the spirit and the messages of their great teachers. Although they were forced to live in hiding, they conceived a plan for rewriting the body of laws that had been handed down for generations and to do so in a way that would embody the ideals and principles which they had learned from the prophets. It was a great and daring plan and they were able to carry it out with a high degree of success. When their work had been finished they waited for a propitious moment to give it publicity. To go back with it to Jerusalem, while Manasseh was still king, would be to court disaster not only for themselves but for their project as well. To avoid this tragedy they remained in hiding until the king had died. After

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[11] Hos. 5:13-14; Isa. 31:1-9.

[12] See *The Martyrdom of Isaiah* in the *Pseudepigrapha* of the Old Testament.

Josiah had come to the throne, they made their way back to the city and "lost" the new lawbook in the temple. It was soon discovered by the priest Hilkiah while workmen who had been commissioned by the king were making some needed repairs on the building. It was taken at once to the king and read in his presence. Josiah was deeply moved. The record says he "rent his clothes" and we can readily understand why he did so, for the book pronounced judgment on many of the things he was doing. He sent to "inquire of the LORD" and when Huldah the prophetess confirmed the words of the book, he took measures to have its teaching incorporated into the law of the land.

The story concerning the discovery of this lawbook is recorded in the second Book of Kings.[13] In general, biblical scholars are agreed that this book was none other than what we now have in Chapters 5 to 26 and 28 of Deuteronomy. The code of laws begins with Chapter 12. Chapters 5 to 11 contain a hortatory introduction which sets forth the purpose for which the laws were given and explains the spirit in which the various requirements were made. The fact that the entire lawbook is attributed to Moses does not necessarily imply that he was the direct author of all its contents. It is indeed difficult to see how he could have given so many laws that were entirely inappropriate to the age in which he lived but which were particularly suited to the conditions which prevailed in Judah during the seventh century. The evidence would seem to indicate beyond any reasonable doubt that these laws were formulated by men who were still living when the book was discovered in the temple. They wrote in the spirit of Moses and did for their age and generation the same type of work that Moses had done at an earlier date.

The Law of the Central Sanctuary

One of the most important laws in the new code called for a closing of all of the outlying sanctuaries and a centralization of worship at the temple in Jerusalem.[14] Prior to this time it had been customary for the Hebrew people to offer sacrifices at any one of the local shrines established in various parts of the land. The motive back of the new legislation can be seen in the protests which the prophets had made against the worship of false gods and against the manner in which Yahweh worship had been conducted. Israel had not been faithful to Yahweh. Hosea had compared her conduct to that of an adulterous woman. She had not hesitated to bestow favors on the baal deities whenever it appeared that it would be to her advantage to do so. Even among those who professed loyalty to Yahweh, the forms of worship had become so contaminated with elements that belonged to the religion of the Canaanites that they were no longer acceptable. Something had to be done to purify the worship of Yahweh and to keep it separate and distinct from that of other deities.

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[13] II Kings 22.
[14] Deut. 12:1-14.

The authors of the new code believed the situation would be greatly improved if the offering of sacrifices were confined to one place. It would then be possible for properly qualified persons to supervise the services and see that they were conducted in the right manner. The priests who would officiate at the temple would be placed in a more favorable environment. They would not be exposed to the temptations present when their work was performed in close proximity to the baal shrines. Under these new conditions Yahweh worship could be interpreted in the spirit of the prophets, rather than used as an instrument for obtaining political security or material prosperity.

The establishment of a single sanctuary where all the sacrifices must be offered would serve not only as a safeguard against the worship of false deities, but it would also lend support to the idea that Yahweh alone was the supreme god of all the world. If there was any one idea that the Deuteronomists wished to emphasize above all others it was that of monotheism. "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD; and you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might." The existence and use of many sanctuaries would at least carry the suggestion that a different deity was present in each one. It is quite probable that some people interpreted it that way even though the deity would be known as Yahweh in each instance. But even if it were recognized that the same Yahweh was present in each local shrine, it was still possible to believe in the existence and power of other gods for the foreign nations.[15] We know that this idea was prevalent prior to the era of the great prophets. In fact it was for the purpose of counteracting this notion that many of their messages were given. Amos was the first of the prophets who had seriously challenged this belief. He had identified Yahweh with the idea of universal justice, the principles of which were binding not only on the people of Israel but on all other nations as well.[16] Isaiah, too, had proclaimed the same doctrine to the people of Judah. He had made it clear that Yahweh's laws were universal in their application and hence could never be set aside by the gods of the foreign nations. The law of the central sanctuary was intended to give further emphasis to the ethical monotheism which these prophets had proclaimed.

It is true that the Deuteronomists did make many references to the gods of other nations and in so doing they implied a belief in the existence of these deities. But this was not a denial of monotheism for the gods of the surrounding nations were not regarded as comparable to Yahweh. They were powerless to defeat his will or to nullify the moral requirements which he had given. In a very real sense they were subordinate to his power and were able to function at all only because he permitted them to do so.

Yahweh is interpreted as a spiritual being. The anthropomorphism of earlier generations has no place in this lawbook. This is another reason why the Deuteronomists believed idol worship should not be tolerated. The symbols used to designate the deities of foreign gods were inappropriate for a spiritual deity whose chief characteristics were associated with justice, kindness, and mercy. The authors of this book emphasize repeatedly the way in which Yahweh has bestowed mercy and kindness upon his people.[17] The language which they use reminds one of Hosea and there can be little doubt that it was this prophet who inspired their references to the many events in which Yahweh's loving-kindness to Israel had been demonstrated.

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[15] A belief in the existence of other gods than Yahweh continues for a long time after Deuteronomy but they are not regarded as comparable to him with respect to power.

[16] Amos 1, 2.

[17] He was regarded as a loving and merciful God in his attitude toward the Hebrews but he was very different in his relationship toward the other nations.

Yahweh's Ethical Demands

In no part of the Deuteronomic code can the influence of the eighth-century prophets be seen more clearly than in those laws which were designed to bring about a more equitable distribution of property, and to protect in various ways the rights and liberties of exploited individuals. The Deuteronomists tried to make concrete the prophetic doctrine that what Yahweh requires above all else is "to do justice and to love kindness." [18] In order to carry out the spirit of these requirements, they believed it was necessary to place certain restrictions on practices which were then current in the land. One of these was known as the year of release.[19] It was a law which provided that at the end of every six-year period the property which individuals had been forced to surrender in order to satisfy the claims of their creditors must be returned to the former owners. The purpose of this law was to correct a situation that the prophets had protested in the name of justice. Isaiah, for example, had uttered a bitter invective against those "who join house to house, who add field to field." His criticism was directed not so much against the practice of individuals adding to the amount of property which they owned as it was to the particular methods which they were using to do it. It had long been customary among the Hebrews for loans to be made among their own people without payment of interest for the use of the money. However, each person who borrowed money was required to give a "surety" for the loan. This usually consisted of either a part of or all the property that he owned. If he could not repay the loan when it was due, the property he had given in pledge would be forfeited. In this way many persons who, through unfortunate circumstances had been forced to borrow money, had in time lost possession of their land and their goods. In extreme cases, sons or daughters had been sold into slavery in order that an owner might retain his own property. Judging from the prophetic oracles having to do with this subject, one would conclude that many had lost a large portion of their holdings and were consequently dependent on the mercy and charity of those who were materially prosperous. The new law gave to these poor individuals an opportunity to become free from the burden of debt and thus to start over again with a fair chance of winning economic independence for themselves.[20]

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[18] Mic. 6:8.
[19] Deut. 15:1-11.

The law concerning the year of release provided not only for a return of property that had been taken as security for a debt but also for the freedom of Hebrew slaves.[21] At the end of every six-year period the owner must free his slaves, and he must see to it that they do not leave him empty-handed. He must give them enough from his own storehouse and his flocks to enable them to provide for themselves until their own security has been established. In doing this, the owners of the slaves must remember that their ancestors were at one time slaves in Egypt, and since Yahweh was kind and merciful in his deliverance of them, they must express a similar attitude in their dealings with the poor and unfortunate among their own people.

Although the year of release was intended to safeguard the rights and interests of the poor, it did not always work out to their advantage. Sometimes, as the year of release would draw near, poor people would be unable to secure any loans at all. Creditors would know that the year of release would make it impossible for them to collect the debts that were owed to them. Hence, they would refuse to make loans until the seventh year had passed. The authors of the Deuteronomic code foresaw this circumstance and tried to prevent it by making a rule that no one should refuse to loan money because the year of release was near at hand.[22] It is doubtful, however, if this provision helped very much.

Along with the year of release a number of provisions were made covering the property that could be taken in pledge for a loan. For instance, when a poor man borrowed money his creditor could not go into his house and take what he might find in pledge. He must wait outside while the poor man went into the house and brought it out. Then, as a further courtesy to the poor man, he must not keep the goods taken in pledge overnight but must return them at the going down of the sun.[23] Some things could not be taken as security for a loan no matter how urgent the case might be. "No man shall take a mill or an upper millstone to pledge." [24] The reason for this was that the poor man must not be deprived of the essentials for his daily living.

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[20] The purpose of this law was similar in some respects to our present laws concerning bankruptcy.

[21] Deut. 15:12-18.

[22] Deut. 15:9-10.

The prophets had criticized the landlords who deprived their laborers of the wages which they had earned. Both Amos and Micah had uttered vigorous protests against the way in which working men had been exploited by their employers. To help correct this situation the new code of laws provided that the laborer be paid his wages on the same day that he performed his work.[25] This applied not only to Hebrew servants but to foreign laborers as well. Anyone who builds a house is required to construct a proper scaffold so that workmen will not be exposed to unnecessary danger in the performance of their work.[26]

Another law, designed to protect the poor against the unscrupulous practices of certain merchants, was one which forbade the use of different measures for goods that were being sold. "You shall not have in your bag two kinds of weights, a large and a small. You shall not have in your house two kinds of measures, a large and a small. A full and just weight you shall have, a full and just measure you shall have." [27] Further protection for the individual was provided in the law which forbade the removal of the neighbor's landmark.[28] The same purpose can be seen again in the procedures that were set up for the administration of justice in matters pertaining to the conviction and punishment of criminals. It is considered improper to pronounce a man guilty of a crime because one person has testified against him. Two or more witnesses are required in order to establish his guilt. For those who have been found

[23] Deut. 24:10-13.
[24] Deut. 24:6.
[25] Deut. 24:14-15.
[26] Deut. 22:8.
[27] Deut. 25:13-15.
[28] Deut. 19:14.

guilty and who are to be punished with stripes, a limit is established in the number of stripes that may be given to him. Only forty stripes are allowed. Anything more than this number entitles the criminal to take action against those who inflicted excessive punishment on him.

For those who have been falsely accused of murder or some other crime of a serious nature, the Hebrews are instructed to establish cities of refuge where the accused may go and reside with full protection of his life and property until such time as he shall have been given a fair trial.[29] If he is found guilty he must then suffer punishment but otherwise he is allowed to go free. This law was especially valuable in protecting individuals from personal enemies who would not hesitate to bring false charges against them for the sole purpose of making them suffer.

It is of course impossible to enforce kindness or mercy by means of legislation but it is quite obvious that the development and encouragement of these attitudes was the purpose of many specific requirements included in this code. For example, special care must be exercised in dealing with sojourners, the fatherless, and the widows. They must not be defrauded through the use of unjust practices and no one shall take advantage of their inability to look out for their own interests. For those who are dependent on the fields or the orchards of others for their living, it is provided that the owner shall not glean his grain the second time,[30] and if anyone who is hungry comes by an orchard or vineyard he shall be permitted to eat all that he wishes at the moment. He shall not, of course, be allowed to take the fruit or grain with him.

These laws, and many others of a similar nature, constitute a most important part of the Deuteronomic code. They indicate the ethical requirements which, in accordance with the prophetic teaching, are the major demands which Yahweh makes upon his people. But not all Yahweh's requirements were of an ethical nature. Although the Deuteronomists had great respect for the moral instruction of the prophets they did not regard it as a substitute for ritualistic requirements. Rather, it was something that should be added to the laws already in existence. Religion, as they saw it, should include the regulations of the priests as well as the moral emphasis of the prophets.

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[29] Deut. 19:1-10.

[30] Deut. 24:19.

Ritualistic Requirements

The most important law belonging to this group is the one that has been described as the law of the central sanctuary. Because this law required that the offering of sacrifices be performed only at the temple in Jerusalem it became necessary for every loyal worshiper of Yahweh to attend the services performed in that place at least once each year. For those who lived in close proximity to that city it was a comparatively easy matter to conform to this regulation, but it required a considerable effort on the part of those who lived a long distance from the shrine. There were three occasions, according to the Deuteronomists, when it would be appropriate for anyone to come to the temple. These occasions coincided with the three annual festivals known as the Feast of the Passover, the Feast of Weeks, and the Feast of Tabernacles. Although the observance of these feasts was required as a necessary part of the worship, it was intended that they should be joyful occasions. For this reason provision was made for social activities such as feasting and the pleasures of companionship.

Since the offering of sacrifices was to be confined to the one legitimate sanctuary, it was necessary to provide for the slaughtering of animals that were to be used for food. This was done by permitting the owner of an animal to have it killed for this purpose in his own local community. However, an important requirement was made of the person who did the slaughtering. He must see to it that no blood is left in the meat. It must all be poured out on the ground.

Instruction was given for the payment of tithes and offerings to be made at the time of the regular visits to the central place of worship. If the journey was so long that visits could not be made except on rare occasions, provisions were included for the proper distribution and use of the goods which would otherwise have been presented at the temple. The Deuteronomists were concerned about the manner in which tithes and offerings should be given and they were especially careful to make adequate arrangements for the care of the Levites who had no regular portion of their own.

Besides the conduct of the worship taking place in the temple, attention was given to a number of matters pertaining to the everyday life of the people. One of these had to do with the prohibition of the eating of unclean meat.[31] Lists were given of various species of animals, fowls, and fish suitable or not for use as food. A sharp distinction was made between those that were clean and unclean. The stipulation in regard to swine's flesh is a typical illustration. Although the swine has a divided hoof it does not chew its cud. It is therefore unclean and the Hebrews are forbidden to eat it or even to touch the carcass of the dead animal. The reason that is given for these prohibitions has nothing to do with the hygienic character of the meat. They are forbidden because they are unclean in the sense that they are contaminated with the presence of evil spirits. It is therefore important for the Hebrews to avoid any direct contact with them.

Ritualistic cleanliness is also required in several other matters as well. The military camp must be kept free from defilement and whenever a village has been defiled with the presence of an unknown murderer it can be purified only by means of a ceremony in which the neck of a heifer is broken.[32] The presence of leprosy makes a community unclean. The body of a hanged criminal must not be allowed to dangle on the tree overnight lest the land be defiled by it. The same idea of ritualistic purity seems to be involved in the statute which forbids a man to sow his field with two kinds of grain or to wear a garment which has been made of linen and wool mixed together.[33]

This blending of ritualistic requirements with the ethical demands of Yahweh is an interesting characteristic of the Book of Deuteronomy. In some respects it set the pattern followed during the later centuries of Judaism. Although much of the book was inspired by the ethical teachings of the prophets, there are many evidences of a spirit of nationalism which made important discriminations in favor of the Hebrew people and against the various nations with whom they came in contact. As a general rule, foreigners are regarded as inferior to the Hebrews and unless their presence contributed something to the welfare of the Israelites they were to be exterminated completely. Any attempt to pattern the worship of Yahweh after that of the other gods was strictly disapproved. Foreign marriages were forbidden. Yahweh was a war-god who sponsored the conquest of Canaan by the Israelites and he would always lead his people in their military conquests of the surrounding nations.

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[31] Deut. 14:3-20.
[32] Deut. 21:1-4.
[33] Deut. 22:9-11.

Along with this spirit of nationalism one finds in Deuteronomy an increasing emphasis given to the idea of material rewards. In the hortatory introduction to the book and again in the list of blessings and curses which are recorded in Chapter 28, promises are set forth to the effect that those who will obey all the statutes and ordinances contained in this code of laws will receive not merely spiritual blessings but material benefits as well.

> "he will love you, bless you, and multiply you; he will also bless the fruit of your body and the fruit of your ground, your grain and your wine and your oil, the increase of your cattle and the young of your flock, in the land which he swore to your fathers to give you." (Deut. 7:13)

The promised blessings will include freedom from all sickness as well as victories over their enemies in battle.

> "And the LORD will take away from you all sickness; and none of the evil diseases of Egypt, which you knew, will he inflict upon you, but he will lay them upon all who hate you." (Deut. 7:15)

The threat of severe punishment is used as an additional incentive to promote obedience to the laws of this book. Idolatry must be completely exterminated even if it requires one's closest relatives be put to death. A rebellious son may receive the death sentence if he pays no attention to the instruction that has been given to him.[34] False witnesses are to be punished with the same injury which they have inflicted upon others, and the sin of adultery is also punishable by death. Failure to observe the laws and statutes of this code will bring all sorts of calamity upon the nation as a whole.

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[34] Deut. 21:18-21.

> "And you shall become a horror, a proverb, and a byword, among all the peoples where the Lord will lead you away. You shall carry much seed into the field, and shall gather little in; for the locust shall consume it. You shall plant vineyards and dress them, but you shall neither drink of the wine nor gather the grapes; for the worm shall eat them. You shall have olive trees throughout all your territory, but you shall not anoint yourself with the oil; for your olives shall drop off. You shall beget sons and daughters, but they shall not be yours; for they shall go into captivity." (Deut. 28:37-41)

It would be hard to overestimate the importance of Deuteronomy. It marks a great turning point in the development of the Hebrew religion. From this time forward, it was a religion "of the book." The laws were now expressed in a relatively permanent form and thus the duties of the people, so far as their relation to Yahweh was concerned, were fixed for a long time to come. Since Yahweh was an eternal god his laws could never be changed. New ones might be added from time to time but it was unthinkable that any of the requirements which Yahweh had given could ever be set aside. In order to impress on Hebrew minds the importance of these laws and to perpetuate their influence for all time to come, the people were instructed to teach the laws diligently to their children. The precepts and commandments of the book must be committed to memory and incorporated into their habits of living so that the entire course of their future both individually and socially would be governed by them.

The result of all this was to extend the influence of the book to where it became the dominant factor in shaping the ideals of the people through the centuries that followed. In some respects this influence was a very wholesome one, for the Deuteronomists had made a serious attempt in this code of laws to express concretely the ethical teachings of the great prophets. They tried to curb the more flagrant forms of social and economic injustice which prevailed in the land. But, as we have pointed out before, the laws contained in this book include a great many other things that are not altogether in harmony with the spirit of the prophets and the effects of these were not always desirable. There is an absence of the universalism generally characteristic of the prophetic teaching. Yahweh may have been conceived by the Deuteronomists as a universal god but the religion prescribed for the Hebrew people is often narrow and nationalistic in its outlook. The ethical standards set forth are not always the same for the Hebrews and the non-Hebrews. Yahweh did not treat these two groups in the same way and neither were his people required to do so. Then, too, the combination of ethical requirements with regulations pertaining to the ritual carried with it some unfortunate consequences. It tended in some instances toward the preservation of ancient superstitions and, in general, it gave support to a formalistic interpretation of religion placing a greater emphasis upon strict and literal obedience to divine commands than it did upon the cultivation of those moral attitudes which the prophets had stressed so much.

The Holiness Code

The century that followed the formulation of the Deuteronomic code saw another body of laws added to the ones already in existence. Sometime during the Babylonian exile, or in the period immediately following, an author who had been deeply impressed by the prophet Ezekiel's teaching of holiness, prepared a new code of laws that embodied the spirit of this teaching and gave expression to one of the dominant ideas characteristic of the post-Exilic period. These laws are now recorded in the Book of Leviticus, Chapters 17-26, and they are usually referred to as the Holiness Code. We do not have this code in its original form for there is ample evidence of the work of redactors and priestly editors who have worked over the material so that it might be incorporated in a later document.

Like the prophet Ezekiel, the author of this code of laws made much of the distinction between the holy and the profane. He believed that Yahweh was especially concerned with the holiness of his people and the best way to preserve it was to avoid contact with anything that might defile the people, or the place and manner of their worship. The frequent repetition of "You shall be holy; for I the LORD your God am holy" is a fair indication of the spirit which pervades the entire code. Yahweh in several instances says "I am the LORD who sanctify you." These expressions make it clear that an increasing amount of emphasis is being given to the idea of cultic purity. The term "holiness" no longer denotes the moral quality indicated in Isaiah's opening vision, but it refers to the possession of a peculiar power residing only in objects that have not come into direct contact with anything impure or unclean.

One of the laws contained in this code has to do with the slaughter of animals intended to be used for food. The Deuteronomists, in their code of laws, had given permission to private individuals to slaughter animals for this purpose but this is not true of the Holiness Code. Individuals who were not trained in religious matters would not be able to make proper distinctions between sacred and secular slaughter. Any killing of an animal might be interpreted as a sacrifice to some local demon or spirit. The only way to make sure that this did not happen was to insist that any animal that was to be killed for food must be brought to "the door of the meeting," and there the slaughter could take place under the supervision of one who was properly qualified to do the work. It was especially important for this person to see to it that the blood was properly drained from the meat "For the life of the flesh is in the blood; and I have given it for you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement, by reason of the life." [35]

The idea of cultic purity is illustrated again in the law concerning the sabbath year:

> "Six years you shall sow your field, and six years you shall prune your vineyard, and gather in its fruits; but in the seventh year there shall be a sabbath of solemn rest for the land, a sabbath to the LORD; you shall not sow your field or prune your vineyard." (Lev. 25:3-4)

The Deuteronomic code had provided for a year of release at the end of each six-year period but the reason back of it was entirely ethical in its spirit. It was designed to correct injustices which had arisen out of the holding of property. The sabbath year of the Holiness Code is inspired by a very different motive. Each seventh year is regarded as a holy or sacred time, and it is for this reason that one must not carry on his regular line of work. To do so would profane Yahweh's holy time. Whenever this is done he will require that the land remain idle for a period of time equal to the number of sabbaths that have been profaned. While this particular law in the Holiness Code has reference to yearly sabbaths, it is quite obvious that the same spirit is coming to be accepted in regard to the weekly sabbaths. Instead of an institution which is designed to provide a day of rest to promote the spiritual and physical well being of individuals, it is acquiring more and more of a cultic significance.

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[35] Lev. 17:11.

Another feature of the Holiness Code is a revision of the older laws pertaining to sex relationships.[36] A high standard of ethics in regard to these matters is established for all people, and anyone who violates the commands that are given may be punished by death. The customs of the Egyptians and the Canaanites must not be followed. The ancient Levirate marriage which had been sanctioned in the Deuteronomic code is now forbidden. Neither is it lawful for a man to marry his half-sister or for a husband to marry his wife's sister during the lifetime of the wife. These prohibitions indicate an advance in sexual ethics over the period which recorded the marriage of Abraham and Sarah, and the marriage of Jacob and the two daughters of his uncle Laban. The detailed instruction given concerning sex matters is certainly in harmony with the social welfare of the people although the reason given in support of these precepts is that of preserving the holiness and sanctity of the nation. Here is at least one instance in which ethical and cultic interests are made to coincide.

The laws concerning the prohibition of eating unclean meat are similar to the ones given in Deuteronomy but they are given in the interests of cultic purity.

> "You shall therefore make a distinction between the clean beast and the unclean, and between the unclean bird and the clean; you

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[36] Lev. 20.

> shall not make yourselves abominable by beast or by bird or by anything with which the ground teems, which I have set apart for you to hold unclean." (Lev. 20:25)

The reason for this requirement is as follows:

> "You shall be holy to me; for I the LORD am holy, and have separated you from the peoples, that you should be mine." (Lev. 20:26)

Although the major emphasis in the Holiness Code has to do with cultic purity, it would be a mistake to suppose the author took no account of ethical requirements. Chapter 19 contains a list of commandments embodying the finest ethical teaching of the prophets. Lying, stealing, and various forms of social injustice are strictly forbidden. The people are instructed to be generous in their treatment of the poor and needy, and they are to refrain from oppression or taking advantage of others who may happen to be within their power. It is in this connection that the author gives expression to one of the noblest ideas to be found in the entire Old Testament.

> "You shall not hate your brother in your heart, but you shall reason with your neighbor, lest you bear sin because of him. You shall not take vengeance or bear any grudge against the sons of your own people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD." (Lev. 19:17-18)

Like the Book of Deuteronomy the Holiness Code is presented as an address delivered by Moses to the children of Israel. For this reason many of the laws which are contained in it are mentioned in connection with "the tent of the meeting" or some other object or condition which prevailed during the wilderness period.

However, the evidence is conclusive that most of the specific laws included in the code date from a period as late as the Babylonian exile. It is quite probable that some of them were written at an even later date. They are expressive of the spirit that was characteristic of the post-Exilic period and which contributed so much toward the development of Judaism as it existed during the closing centuries of the pre-Christian era.

The Priestly Code

The final stage in the development of Old Testament law was the work of the priests. It is expressed in what is usually known as the *P* narrative, one of the four main documents included in the Hexateuch or first six books of the Old Testament. It is not strictly a law code but rather a combination of law and history so arranged that the legal provisions contained in it are presented in the framework of a world history which begins with the story of creation and ends with an elaborate account of the ritual as it was observed in post-Exilic times. Like the two previous codes which have just been considered, the major portion of the laws contained in this document are presented as though they had been given by Moses. However, the contents of the laws as well as the historical material associated with them indicate clearly enough that they belong to a relatively late period of Hebrew history, although it is quite probable that the authors made use of materials which had been in existence for a long time.

The date which is usually given for the writing of this document is about 450 B.C. It was not written all at once nor does it seem likely that the narrative as a whole was the work of a single individual. There is ample evidence to indicate that various parts of it were originally composed at different times and by different persons. It is, however, quite possible that the final arrangement of these materials was the work of one person.[37] We refer to him by the use of the single letter *P,* since we do not know his name, but we are sure that he represented the point of view generally characteristic of the priests during the period following the Babylonian exile.

When the temple at Jerusalem had been destroyed in 586 B.C. and the people were taken into captivity, it was no longer possible for the priests to minister in the sanctuary as they had done before. They could not build another temple in Babylonia because they were forbidden by the Deuteronomic code to offer sacrifices at any place other than the one sacred spot in Jerusalem. Under

[37] For a discussion of the authorship of the Priestly Code see R. H. Pfeiffer, *op. cit.,* pp. 250-70.

these conditions it must have been a fair question as to how the worship of Yahweh would survive. It is true that the exiles still possessed the law codes which had been given to them and it was still possible for them, even though they were in a strange land, to live in harmony with the moral teachings of the prophets. But these factors were not in themselves sufficient to promote the survival of their religion insofar as the great majority of their people were concerned. They needed to have their faith symbolized by something that they could see and hear. Then, too, it was necessary to formulate a more definite set of rules in accordance with which it would be possible to determine one's loyalty to Yahweh. It was in connection with the fulfilment of these needs that the work of the priests became most significant. If they could not offer sacrifices to Yahweh in a strange land, they could at least make plans for the way in which the services should be carried out when they returned to their own land. The prophet Ezekiel had already done a great deal along this line and his work had helped to keep alive the faith of his people in the coming of a glorious future. The priests who came after Ezekiel carried on the spirit of his work, revising some of the regulations which he had prescribed and adding many others to them.

The work of these men constituted a most important factor in the survival of the Jewish faith. It gave to their people something definite and concrete to which they could cling while they were living in a land of exile. The distinctions which they made between clean and unclean and between the sacred and the secular could be put into use at any time or place for they were not dependent on the services of the temple. It also meant that the Zadokean priests, who were not permitted to minister in the temple after it was rebuilt, still had an important task to perform. They could give oral instruction to the people about the many duties connected with their religion. It is possible that this work of teaching and interpreting the law had something to do with the origin of the synagogue as a place for instruction and worship. In view of the number of laws included in this code the necessity for interpretation is obvious if a complete understanding is to be derived from them.

The Origin of Ecclesiastical Institutions

One of the major objectives in the writing of the *P* document was the development of an attitude of reverence toward the ecclesiastical institutions peculiar to the Hebrew religion. To do this it was not enough merely to point out that the observance of these institutions had been commanded by Yahweh in the body of laws which he had given to them. It was necessary to relate stories that had to do with the origin of each of them. Further, it must be shown that these institutions were not the product of any recent development in Hebrew history but rather that they had been in existence since ancient times. The older the institution the greater the prestige that would be attached to it.

Four of these institutions are discussed in the *P* narrative and each one is connected in the story of its founding with the name of an ancient patriarch. The sabbath institution goes back to the time of Adam. The rite of circumcision is established by Abraham. With Noah the prohibition of the eating of blood becomes an essential requirement, and with Moses comes the establishment of the Feast of the Passover. These four institutions are thus shown to be of ancient origin and their introduction by these great patriarchs is an illustration of the progress which has been achieved in the development of the Hebrew religion.

The sabbath institution is the most ancient of the four and therefore it is the most important. It was established at the time of the creation of the world. In fact the setting up of this institution was the crowning act of the creation week. It furnished an appropriate climax to the story of the entire creation and it was probably for this reason that the author began his narrative with an account of the events which took place on each day of the creation week. This account of the origin of the sabbath gave to that institution a different meaning than it had before. In the Deuteronomic Code the sabbath had its beginning at the time of the exodus from Egypt. It was a memorial of the deliverance of the Hebrews from bondage and for this reason it had an ethical significance. It was to serve as a reminder of the fact that they should be kind and merciful in their dealings with one another and in their attitude toward hired servants, foreigners, and even in their treatment of animals. But in the *P* document the ethical meaning of the institution is overshadowed by the fact that it is to be regarded as a holy day, one that was set apart at the beginning of time. People must refrain from doing work on that day because Yahweh has commanded them to do so.

The story concerning Noah and the great flood was used to introduce the author's account of the second dispensation in the history of the world. Following the flood a covenant was made between God and Noah in accordance with which men were permitted to use animal flesh for food but only on condition that first the blood must be drained from the meat. In this way the origin of the law concerning the prohibition of blood was traced back to the time of the great flood. Its observance began with Noah, the patriarch to whom the instruction had been given that his descendants should multiply and replenish the earth. He was also the one to whom the promise had been made that never again would God destroy the earth with a flood. This association of the law of blood with Noah was an indication of its great importance. Like the sabbath institution it had been in existence for a long time and therefore no one should regard it lightly.

It was with the story of Abraham that the author began his account of the third dispensation. Prior to the time of Abraham the deity had been known as *Elohim*. To Abraham he was known as *El Shaddai*. This is an indication that Abraham had a better understanding of the divine nature than any of his predecessors. It was not until the time of Moses that God had revealed himself by the name *Yahweh* but evidently the name used by Abraham marked an important transition from the earlier to a later conception. It was with Abraham that circumcision was first used as a religious rite. According to the covenant which was made with him, Abraham was to become the father of a great nation that would finally have permanent possession of the land of Canaan. As a sign of the relationship between God and Abraham's descendants all males were to be circumcised on the eighth day following their birth. Like the other two institutions which have been mentioned, circumcision was a rite of cultic rather than ethical significance. It must be observed for no other reason than the fact that God had commanded it. Obedience to this as well as other commandments that he had given was the real test of men's loyalty to him.

The fourth dispensation is presented in the work of Moses. He was the first one to whom God had revealed himself as Yahweh. He was the one through whom the great body of Israel's law had been transmitted to the people. With him a new epoch began in the development of the Hebrew religion. But Moses did not accomplish his work alone. His brother Aaron was always associated with him, and since Aaron was the incarnation of the priesthood, this meant that great significance had been attached to the priestly office from a very early date. With Moses and Aaron we have the establishment of the institution known as the Passover. Closely associated with it were the feast of unleavened bread and the dedication of the first-born. Another covenant was made with Moses on Mount Sinai at which time instruction was given for the building of an ark and the construction of a tabernacle which the people could carry with them on their journey through the wilderness. The story of the tabernacle and its furnishings made it possible for the author to place the whole body of Levitical legislation back in the early period when the Israelites were traveling through the wilderness on their way to Canaan.

A great deal of the material which belongs to the *P* document consists of genealogies, long lists of minute specifications, and other statistical information. Much of this makes for dull and monotonous reading on the part of one centuries removed from the events that are recorded, but through all this detail the author's purpose stands out clearly and distinctly. He was primarily interested in ecclesiastical institutions and he was writing in order that these institutions might be preserved. To accomplish this purpose it was necessary for the people to be informed concerning their origin, and to be familiar with the detailed instruction for proper ecclesiastic observance. Once this instruction had been mastered the performance of the ritual would become a matter of habit with great significance for the daily lives of the people.

The conception of deity set forth in this narrative is in many respects a lofty and majestic one. The authors were monotheists who believed Yahweh was the one supreme God of all the world. He was the creator of the heavens and the earth, a god who was the source of order and beauty. He had created man in his own image and he had given to him all the instruction that was necessary for the direction of his daily conduct. The one thing which he demanded above all else was strict and literal obedience to the commands which he had given. These commandments included both moral and ritualistic requirements. Because of the greater amount of space and attention given to the rules concerning sacrifices and the performance of other duties pertaining to the place, form, time, and manner of worship, one might easily draw the conclusion that the priestly writers were interested only in the observance of ritualistic requirements. This was not the case. The reason they had little to say about ethical matters is that they took them for granted. It was understood that moral conduct was essential. It was presupposed on the part of those who worshiped Yahweh. The priests wanted to make it clear that ritualistic requirements were also important. From the practical point of view it was much easier to enforce these laws since they pertained only to the overt acts, regardless of the motives which caused them.

The specific items of legislation included in the Priest Code covers a long list of topics. Much of the material which we now find in the Books of Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers belonged to this document. Instruction is given for the building of the tabernacle, the organization of the priesthood, the garments to be worn by the priests, the daily burnt offerings, the payment of taxes, the use of incense, meal offerings, sin offerings, trespass offerings, peace offerings, purification ceremonies, and many other items having to do with the conduct of the worship. The main purpose of these ceremonies was to inculcate in the mind of the nation the importance of obedience to all the commands that had been given. People must be taught to abhor sin in any of its forms and they must be made to realize that it is no easy matter for one to achieve atonement for the wrongdoing that he has committed. One of the most important of the ceremonies which is described in this code is the one to be performed on the day of Atonement.[38] It is a long and impressive ceremony with many important details, designed to emphasize the fact that the entire future of the people depends upon their getting rid of sin and receiving forgiveness from Yahweh for the mistakes they have made.

[38] Lev. 16.

Chapter 15

THE SAGES OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

There is a passage in the Book of Jeremiah which refers to three groups of persons from whom the critics of the great prophet sought to obtain counsel in their efforts to discredit his work. It reads as follows: "Then they said, 'Come, let us make plots against Jeremiah, for the law shall not perish from the priest, nor counsel from the wise, nor the word from the prophet.' " (Jer. 18:18) This passage is instructive because of its reference to a distinct class of individuals who were known as Israel's sages or wise men. Their position was in a sense comparable to that of the priests and to that of the prophets, although their particular methods and points of view were different from those which characterized each of the other two groups. The sages were the teachers or men of wisdom whose function it was to give instruction to their contemporaries about the practical problems of everyday living. Their work can be recognized throughout the various periods of Hebrew history. In fact some of their sayings were included in the early literature which came out of the ninth and eighth centuries prior to the time of the Assyrian invasion. For example, the riddles of Samson,[1] the Parable of the Bramble Bush that wanted to be king of the trees,[2] as well as numerous short sayings and witty proverbs are typical of the work which they did. During the post-Exilic period the influence of this group came into greater prominence than it had received before. At least three of the books they produced came eventually to have a place in the canon of the Old Testament scriptures. They are the Books of Job, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes. In addition to these there have been preserved two apocryphal books known as Ecclesiasticus or the Wisdom of ben-Sirach and Wisdom of Solomon.

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[1] Judg. 14.
[2] Judg. 9:7-15.

One of the distinguishing characteristics of this literature is to be found in the problems which it discusses. Unlike the prophets, who were interested primarily in problems pertaining to the national welfare, the sages were concerned with the individual. Instead of writing about the fate of Judah and Jerusalem[3] they discussed those problems that had to do with the daily affairs of ordinary persons. They talked about the duties of children to their parents, the relationship of rulers to their subjects, the control of one's physical appetites, honesty in business relationships, the proper use of the tongue, kindness toward persons in need, the problem of human suffering, the values of thrift, habits of courtesy, and numerous other matters that had to do with personal relationships. It can readily be seen that such problems were in no way peculiar to the Hebrew people. The instruction given would be as applicable to people of one nation and generation as they would to any other group. In this sense we may say that the literature of the sages had a universal appeal that was quite different from the writings of either the priests or the prophets.

The method used by the sages in the presentation of their teachings may be described as an appeal to reason. They did not preface their remarks with a "thus saith Yahweh" in the manner of the prophets. Instead they asked individuals to think for themselves.[4] They believed Yahweh's will could be made known through the processes of correct thinking as well as by listening to the voice of authority. This approach to truth, especially with reference to matters of moral conduct, seems to resemble the Greek philosophers more than the Hebrew prophets. As a general rule the Greeks had taught that ignorance is the chief source of evil in human life. Sometimes they insisted that it was the only source.[5] We would probably be going too far if we said the sages of the Old Testament accepted this position completely. But we are well within the truth when we say they recognized ignorance as one of the major causes of evil. They always refer to the fool as one whose ways should be avoided while the actions of the wise man are consistently made an object of praise. The contrast between the wise and the foolish that is emphasized so strongly in certain parts of the New Testament is a reflection of the ideas set forth by Israel's sages.[6]

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[3] Isa. 1:1; 2:1.

[4] It is true that some of the prophets did call upon their people to think for themselves. Both Hosea and Isaiah insist that their people are going into captivity because of a lack of proper understanding, but neither of them placed the same emphasis on individual thinking that we find in the writings of the sages.

The name of King Solomon has come to be associated with much of the wisdom literature of the Old Testament. This fact does not, in itself, indicate that he was the author of any part of it. We are told in I Kings that Solomon wrote three thousand proverbs.[7] Before the canon of the Old Testament was completed some of the editors responsible for this work had evidently assumed that these sayings formed the basis for what we now regard as the books of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes. An examination of the contents of these writings makes it very clear that this assumption was an unwarranted one. Most of the instruction contained in them is contrary in spirit to the ideas and practices of King Solomon and the particular topics mentioned in the passage from the Book of Kings do not appear in them at all. While it is possible that the king of Israel may have written some of the proverbs contained in the wisdom literature we can be sure that the most of them came from a later date. Many of them have been assigned to non-Jewish writers which is a further indication of their international character and universal appeal. Giving credit to Solomon for the entire collection belongs to a relatively late tradition. It was probably due to the fact that Solomon had befriended the sages of his time, and their successors continued to think kindly of him. Then, too, we know of the tendency to attribute writings produced at a late date to prominent individuals who had lived a long time before. This gave to the writings a greater prestige and in some instances it was responsible for their inclusion in the canon of scriptures.

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[5] An illustration of this point of view can be seen in the statement attributed to Socrates, "Ignorance is the only evil; knowledge the wings wherewith we fly to heaven."

[6] In the parable of the ten virgins, five were wise and five were foolish. Concerning the man whose fields produced bountifully so that he decided to tear down his barns and build greater, it is said, "Fool! This night your soul is required of you." The so-called Sermon on the Mount closes with the parable of the wise man who built his house on a rock and the foolish man who built his house on the sand.

[7] I Kings 4:32.

More important than the question of authorship is the meaning that was attached to the concept of wisdom. Wisdom is declared to be the chief thing in human life, the highest goal which an individual may pursue.[8] Men are urged to seek wisdom with their whole heart and mind, for loyalty to this cause was identified with the highest devotion that one could render to Yahweh. In some instances the writers go so far as to personify wisdom thus indicating their belief that it belonged to the deity and was associated with Yahweh in the creation of the world. To follow wisdom was in their judgment the way for an individual to live in harmony with divine principles and it was the method whereby persons could overcome the evil tendencies that were present in their own nature.

The Book of Job

In general, Israel's sages had agreed with the prophets concerning the rule of justice in the affairs of men and nations. Because Yahweh was conceived as a just being whose power extended to every part of the universe, it followed that people everywhere must receive exactly what they deserve. The prophets had emphasized this point in their interpretation of the rise and fall of nations. The sages whose works are included in the Book of Proverbs had emphasized it no less in their instruction pertaining to individual living. Whenever nations or individuals were obliged to suffer, one explanation was always regarded as appropriate. Suffering was punishment which Yahweh inflicted upon them because of their sins. By the same token, material prosperity and the happiness which goes along with it could be regarded as evidence of Yahweh's favor bestowed upon individuals or groups as a reward for righteous

[8] Prov. 3:13-15; 4:7.

living. This was the orthodox opinion which prevailed among the Jews of ancient times and we may add that it has generally been accepted by both Jews and Christians even to the present time. It was this opinion that was challenged by an unknown author whose work forms the basis for our present Book of Job.[9]

The book in its present form is obviously a composite work. The prologue (Job 1, 2) and epilogue (Job 42:7-17) constitute a unit, and the same is true of the symposium (Job 2-27, 29-31) which records the speeches of Job and each of the three friends. The speeches of Elihu (Job 32-37) constitute a later addition to the book and the same is probably true of the nature poems or speeches attributed to Yahweh (Job 38-41). Chapter 28 contains a short and beautiful poem in praise of wisdom, but since it apparently has no connection with the preceding or following chapters we may conclude it was not a part of the original documents. The order in which the various parts of the book first made their appearance is a matter of some disagreement. All that we can do is to present a reasonable hypothesis that will offer an explanation for the materials that have been assembled. On this basis we may say the prologue and epilogue belonged to an ancient folk tale with which the author of the main part of the book was familiar. He used it to introduce his theme but because he was not satisfied with the solution it offered to the problem of the suffering of innocent people, he presented his own argument in the form of a series of speeches delivered by Job and the three friends. His book ended with the close of Chapter 31 which reads, "the words of Job are ended."

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[9] There is an enormous amount of literature dealing with the Book of Job. Two of the books which are especially important in this connection are Morris Jastrow, *The Book of Job* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Co., 1920), and Moses Buttenweiser, *The Book of Job* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1922). For a philosophical interpretation of the problem which is central in the Book of Job see Josiah Royce, *Studies of Good and Evil* (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1898), and Hartley B. Alexander, *Nature and Human Nature* (Chicago: Open Court, 1920), especially the chapter entitled "Beauty and Pain." See also Peter A. Bertocci, *Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion* (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1951), Frederick R. Tennant, *Philosophical Theology*, Vol. II (London: Cambridge University Press, 1930), chaps. xvi-xvii, and A. R. King, *The Problem of Evil* (New York: The Ronald Press Co., 1952).

The symposium presents the classic challenge to the time-honored position which maintains that human beings suffer only what they deserve to suffer. This view is stated eloquently by each of the three friends but after each presentation Job answers the argument and shows definitely that their charges against him are not true. At the end of the debate Job has not found any adequate solution for his problem but he has demonstrated to any fair-minded person that the old orthodox solution is not true to the facts of human experience. Had the book remained permanently in that form it might not have been preserved as one of the inspired writings of the Old Testament scriptures. Fortunately, for people of later generations, some editor who recognized the unorthodox character of the original work decided to add the speeches of Elihu in an attempt to make the book as a whole teach a lesson that would be in harmony with the view most generally accepted. Another attempt to do the same thing can be seen in the addition of the nature poems in which Yahweh is presented as one who answers Job out of the whirlwind. By pointing out the frailties of human nature in contrast with the majesty and wonders of the created universe, he demonstrates the incompetence of Job to understand the problems and mysteries that pertain to human existence. Neither of these attempts to make the Book of Job orthodox are entirely successful. The Elihu speeches, in spite of elaborate pretenses to the contrary, add little that is new to the arguments of the three friends. The nature poems or speeches attributed to Yahweh answer Job's argument only by ignoring the particular point at issue and substituting a beautiful discussion of another theme. Finally, another attempt is made in the interests of orthodoxy by the inclusion of what is now known as the epilogue.[10] In this section it is stated that Yahweh turned the captivity of Job restoring all that he had lost and giving him in the end twice as much property as he had in the beginning. In spite of the fact that this kind of an ending for the book is contrary in spirit to the ideas expressed in the prologue and in all of Job's speeches, it gave to the book an orthodox interpretation and it is probably for this reason that it came to be included in the cannon of scripture.[11]

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[10] The argument in support of this interpretation of the Book of Job is set forth in Morris Jastrow, *op. cit.*

Since the author of the Book of Job is unknown we cannot state definitely the time when it was written. Many dates have been given to it by various Old Testament scholars ranging all the way from the eighth to the second centuries B.C.[12] While arguments can be given in support of each of these positions no one of them has been entirely convincing. It is true, however, that a majority of scholars tend to favor the post-Exilic period and some date not far from 400 B.C. We may assume, therefore, that this was the approximate time when the book appeared in its original form. Considerable time would have elapsed before the additions were made. It probably required more than a century before the book reached the final form in which it has been preserved.

The intellectual situation which is reflected in the book is more important for our understanding than the precise time when it was written. Its general tone is one of scepticism and the problem with which it deals is one that pertains primarily to individuals rather than the nation as a whole.[13] It is true that there were many occasions during the course of Hebrew history that must have caused people to wonder about the fate of the righteous. It simply was not true that wicked people always had to suffer in proportion to the evil they had committed. Neither did the righteous enjoy prosperity in a manner that would seem appropriate if everything was governed by the principles of justice. The Babylonian captivity might have been explained as punishment sent upon the Jewish people because of their sins but this would not account for the contemporary power and prosperity of the Babylonians. Why should a heathen nation that neither knew Yahweh nor recognized the moral laws associated with his name be permitted to exercise tyranny and oppression over a group of people who were, at least from the moral point of view, superior to them? The evidence seemed to indicate that justice has nothing to do with the destiny of nations. Was the same thing true with regard to individuals? Apparently it was. Prior to the times of Jeremiah and Ezekiel, interest had been centered in Yahweh's dealings with the nation as a whole. Partly as a result of their teachings the emphasis had been changed and people were thinking more about the individual and his relationship to the principles of justice. Yahweh, they had been told, would not punish one person for the sins of another.[14] He dealt with each person on the basis of what he actually deserved. But experience did not support this theory of divine justice in relation to individuals. It often happened that a righteous person suffered even more than a wicked one. At last someone appeared who had the courage to challenge the popular conception. He did not believe the teachings of the prophets or the sages were adequate to account for the actual facts which might be observed in the lives of many individuals. He wrote his book for the purpose of stimulating further inquiry into this very important problem of human suffering.[15]

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[11] This, of course, is not the only reason for its inclusion in the Old Testament but it is probably the chief one responsible for giving to the book an orthodox interpretation.

[12] R. H. Pfeiffer believes the Book of Job was written about 540 B.C. or prior to the time of Deutero-Isaiah. The majority of Old Testament critics place it at a later date.

[13] There is an individual and a social aspect to the problem. In the Book of Job it is the individual aspect that is considered.

For the purpose of introducing his theme he made use of an old folk tale which had probably been in existence for a long time. It contained the story of a righteous man who had to suffer all sorts of privations and pain even though he had done no wrong to merit this treatment. The explanation given for this experience was not a satisfactory one. In fact there were several things about this story which seemed to our author to be contrary to the reality of life. So he used it only for the purpose of introducing the discussion. His own convictions are set forth in the symposium which contains a series of speeches by Job and each of the three friends. In these speeches the friends are made the exponents of the orthodox interpretation of pain and suffering.[16] The speeches of Job represent the author's view which stands in sharp contrast to the position taken by the friends.

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[14] Jer. 31:29-30; Ezek. 18:1-4.

[15] The original author of the book does not present a solution to the problem. He does, however, challenge the ones which had been made prior to his time.

The Prologue

The story begins with an account of Job, a man living in the land of Uz who was renowned for his piety and good works. His righteous conduct had been rewarded by an abundance of material prosperity until the day Satan appeared in the courts of Yahweh and charged that no one served Yahweh for other than selfish reasons.[17] Yahweh denies the charge and points to his faithful servant Job as evidence to support his claim. Satan then maintains that Job's devotion to Yahweh is motivated by selfish considerations. Yahweh has prospered him to the point where he is the wealthiest man in the world. Why wouldn't he render faithful service when he was sure to obtain such a magnificent reward? At this point Yahweh and Satan enter into a kind of bet or wager to determine whether Job would still render this faithful service if he didn't receive the material reward. Satan argues that if the reward were withdrawn Job would curse Yahweh to his face.[18] Yahweh refuses to admit that his servant would do this. To prove this point he tells Satan that Job is in his hands. He can do with him as he pleases so long as he does not inflict any bodily harm on his person.

Satan then went forth from the presence of Yahweh and wrought destruction upon Job's property. As the godly man is sitting at meat with his sons and daughters, messengers arrive announcing the loss of his oxen, sheep, asses, and camels. Finally word comes of the death of his own children. It is a hard blow but Job accepts it all with meekness and humility. He says, "the LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD." [19]

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[16] The term "orthodox" is used here to refer to the view which makes suffering a punishment for sin.

[17] Satan is presented in the prologue as one of the sons of God whose function it is to make reports concerning the activities of human beings. He is not the arch enemy of God whom we find in the literature of the New Testament.

[18] Job 1:11.

[19] Job 1:21.

Still Satan is not convinced. He appears again before Yahweh and in answer to the assertion of Job's integrity in spite of the loss of his possessions he argues that this would not be true if Job's own body were afflicted. "But put forth thy hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse thee to thy face."[20] Again Job is put to the test. His body is covered with boils from his head to his feet. In the midst of his pain and anguish his wife urges him to renounce God and die. But Job remains true. The three friends who have come to comfort him clothe themselves in sackcloth and sit in ashes. They remain silent for seven days and nights, so great is their grief for a friend who has been stricken. Job's integrity has now been proved. No longer can Satan argue that his loyalty to Yahweh is inspired by selfish motives. So ends the prologue.

The story does have an answer to the question, "why do innocent people have to suffer?" It says they suffer in order to prove to Satan or any other interested party that they serve Yahweh for other than selfish reasons. The answer is not, however, a satisfactory one. It is not in harmony with the teachings of the great prophets and neither do the events of the story correspond with actual life. The god of the prophets might indeed punish the wicked and reward the righteous but he was a just being and he would not cause innocent people to suffer merely for the sake of proving to others that they would still remain loyal. The Job of the story might accept his misfortunes without uttering a word of protest but that was not the way a man in real life would act. An innocent man who had been afflicted in this manner would have something to say in his own defense. He ought to be given a chance to say it. Our author wanted to state the argument which might be presented in his behalf. It was for this purpose that he wrote the symposium.

The Symposium

When we pass from the prologue to the speeches of Job and the three friends we become aware of a striking contrast in the character of the persons who are presented. For example,

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[20] Job 2:5.

Job is no longer the meek and passive individual who, in the previous story, accepted without protest every misfortune which fell upon him. Instead, he is now presented as a person in a rebellious mood who laments bitterly the fact that he was ever born.[21] He longs to die and he charges Yahweh with being unjust for treating him in this manner. The friends, too, are unlike the ones we find in the prologue. They do not sit in silence, overcome with grief. On the contrary, they speak out in no uncertain terms telling Job that he is guilty of wrongdoing or else this affliction would never have been placed upon him. We hear no more of a wager between Yahweh and Satan but the whole argument centers around the question of Job's innocence or guilt in view of the suffering he has experienced.

Instead of challenging directly the teachings of the sages and the prophets concerning the reason for human suffering, the author of the Book of Job puts their arguments into the mouths of the three friends, Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite. His reply to the arguments is set forth in the speeches of Job which are made in answer to each of the ones presented by the friends. In each instance Job makes it clear that the conclusions reached by the friends are not supported by the facts. Besides these speeches and replies, the symposium contains an introductory address and a closing address both of which are attributed to Job. In the introductory speech he expresses his dissatisfaction with life as he has been forced to endure it, and in the closing address he presents a masterful account of the moral quality of his own living. Throughout the discussion the charges against Job are brought by Eliphaz and Bildad each of whom speaks three times and by Zophar who speaks twice. Although the friends are using the familiar language of orthodoxy, it is evident that the author of the book did not regard them as convincing for in the speeches of Job we find an adequate reply to all they have said. In the end they are completely silenced.

The orthodox view concerning suffering is expressed in the first speech of Eliphaz:

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[21] Job 3:1-26.

"Think now, who that was innocent ever perished?
Or where were the upright cut off?
As I have seen, those who plow iniquity
and sow trouble reap the same.
By the breath of God they perish,
and by the blast of his anger they are consumed."

. . .

"Can mortal man be righteous before God?
can a man be pure before his Maker?
Even in his servants he puts no trust,
and his angels he charges with error;
how much more those who dwell in houses of clay,
whose foundation is in the dust,
who are crushed before the moth."
(Job 4:7-9, 17-19)

Job replied by asking his accuser to point out the specific sins of which he was guilty. It was easy enough to assume that suffering was, in itself, evidence of one's guilt but it was the assumption that Job called in question. If it were true, then it should be possible to point to the particular wrong that he had committed.

"Teach me, and I will be silent;
make me understand how I have erred.
How forceful are honest words!
But what does reproof from you reprove?
Do you think that you can reprove words,
when the speech of a despairing man is wind?"
(Job 6:24-26)

Bildad the Shuhite repeats the charge made by Eliphaz when he says:

"Behold, God will not reject a blameless man,
nor take the hand of evildoers."
(Job 8:20)

Job's reply to this speech is significant for he points out the impossibility of a human being measuring up to the standard set by a perfect being.

"If it is a contest of strength, behold him!
If it is a matter of justice, who can summon him?
Though I am innocent, my own mouth would condemn me;
though I am blameless, he would prove me perverse.
I am blameless; I regard not myself;
I loathe my life."
(Job 9:19-21)

Job recognizes that God can always find some imperfection in the life of any man. But is a man at fault because he has been created a weak and imperfect mortal being? Certainly not. Neither is it just for God to punish a man for something he has been unable to prevent.

The speech of Zophar the Naamathite is, in some respects, the most severe in its indictment of Job. This is because he sets forth the idea that God is not only a just being but one who is merciful as well.

"But oh, that God would speak,
and open his lips to you,
and that he would tell you the secrets of wisdom!
For he is manifold in understanding.
Know then that God exacts of you less than your guilt deserves."
(Job. 11:5-6)

The three friends have now spoken. They have expressed the view which had been taught by both sages and prophets. Suffering is really man's fault. They can maintain the justice of God only by denying goodness to human beings. But they have not been able to mention any specific sins of which Job was guilty. Neither can they show that Job is morally inferior to themselves. Job sees this clearly and speaks thus in his own defense:

"Will you speak falsely for God,
and speak deceitfully for him?
Will you show partiality toward him,
will you plead the case for God?
Will it be well with you when he searches you out?
Or can you deceive him, as one deceives a man?"
(Job 13:7-9)

In contrast with their dishonest method of defending their conception of God, Job pleads the integrity of his own soul in the face of all misfortune or suffering.

> "Behold, he will slay me; I have no hope;
>   yet I will defend my ways to his face.
> This will be my salvation,
>   that a godless man shall not come before him."
>   (Job 13:15-16)

In the second cycle of speeches the friends repeat their charges against Job using the same type of argument which they put forth in their earlier statements. Job is not convinced that their accusations are just and indeed they have presented no evidence which could not have been used in the same way against them. In reply to the three of them, he says:

> "I have heard many such things;
>   miserable comforters are you all.
> Shall windy words have an end?
>   Or what provokes you that you answer?
> I also could speak as you do,
>   if you were in my place;
> I could join words together against you,
>   and shake my head at you."
>   (Job 16:2-4)

Again Job asks why it is that wicked people live and prosper, becoming old and waxing mighty in power? Even though they have no regard for God or any of the requirements of justice, they are not always punished. He enumerates a long list of sins which are frequently committed by those who prosper. Why doesn't God do something about them? In the closing speech of the symposium Job describes his own manner of living. While he is willing to admit he has not been perfect, he has at least lived better than many of those who have never suffered punishment that is in any sense comparable to that which has come to him.[22]

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[22] The original author of Job apparently did not believe in a life beyond the grave. Chapter 14 is an explicit denial of it. The passage in Chapter 19:25 is regarded as a later addition.

Additions to the Book of Job

The debate between Job and his friends, which makes up the content of the symposium, has ended without finding any satisfactory solution for the problem involved in the suffering of innocent persons. But the argument has accomplished one thing. It has shown that the orthodox interpretation of the problem is not true to the facts which may be observed in the course of human living. Job has been successful in refuting the charges made by the friends and they have nothing more to say. This is probably all that the original author of the book had in mind to do. He could close his book at this point and feel that his purpose in writing it had been accomplished.

The sceptical tone of the book did, however, raise serious questions in the minds of those editors to whom we are indebted for the preservation of this important piece of literature. They could not reconcile the Book of Job in this form with the earlier writings to which they were already committed. Either the book must be rejected or something must be added to make the argument come out the way they thought it should. The latter alternative was the one which they preferred. With this purpose in mind they added the speeches of Elihu to provide a more satisfactory ending to the argument of the symposium.

In his introductory speech Elihu presents himself as a young man who has been standing by while Job refuted the arguments presented by the three friends. He would have spoken earlier but his modesty forced him to remain silent until those who were older had finished speaking.[23] Now that the friends have been silenced, he will speak and tell Job wherein he has been wrong. After these remarks it would be expected that he has something new to offer. But in this respect his speeches are most disappointing. He begins by telling Job that it was wrong for him to maintain his innocence before God because God is so much greater than man.[24] This is not a new argument. Indeed, it is no argument at all but only an unproved assertion concerning

[23] Job 32:8-12.
[24] Job 33:8-12.

the major point at issue. Why should it be wrong for one to maintain his innocence if he really is innocent? If Job is not innocent, why doesn't Elihu tell him what it is that constitutes his sin?

The whole argument of Elihu is based on the assumption that God is just and, therefore, whatever happens in this world must be in accordance with this principle. On this basis he draws the conclusion that Job must be at fault. Because he can think of nothing else which would make Job deserving of his punishment, he accuses him of making false claims with reference to his own innocence. Lengthy statements are made in support of the idea that God never punishes innocent persons nor allows wicked ones to escape. He therefore implores Job to repent and acknowledge his guilt so that God may come to the rescue and save him from his misery. All of this has been presented before in the speeches of the friends but the repetition of their position is presented once more in order to nullify the vindication which Job had made for himself in the earlier portions of the book.

Because the speeches of Elihu, although added in order to support the orthodox position, had failed to accomplish this purpose another addition was made in the series of nature poems which are presented as Yahweh's answer to the arguments of Job.[25] These poems are remarkable for their style as well as their content. They are to be reckoned among the most beautiful portions of the Old Testament. In them the grandeur and majesty of the created universe are described in the most exquisite language. They are especially significant in bringing to light the contrast between a mere human being such as Job and the supreme power that created the heavens and the earth.

"Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth?
  Tell me, if you have understanding.
Who determined its measurements—surely you know!
  Or who stretched the line upon it?
On what were its bases sunk,
  or who laid its cornerstone,

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[25] The nature poems are recorded in Chapters 38 to 41.

when the morning stars sang together,
  and all the sons of God shouted for joy?"
(Job 38:4-7)

In the light of these poems no one can doubt that the universe is filled with mysteries. There are many things too deep for human comprehension. The mind of man is limited in comparison with the wisdom of God. This might be the answer to Job's problem. The reason for his suffering is known to God but it is beyond the understanding of man. Still, one wonders about a solution of this kind. Does it help one to be told that God has the answer to his questions but he cannot find out what that answer may be? Besides, what assurance does one have that God's answer is bound to coincide with the one that has generally been accepted? As a matter of fact these nature poems, beautiful as they are, do not give us the answer to Job's problem.[26] They appear to do so only because they enable the one who reads them to lose sight of the problem and to think about something else in place of it. Even so, the addition of these poems helped a great deal toward an interpretation of the book that would not be offensive to orthodox minds. Without them, the Book of Job might not have been preserved.

No doubt some minds would have been satisfied with the Elihu speeches. Others would have had their doubts put to rest by the nature poems. For those who were still dissatisfied with the solution offered in each of these additions, a third one was added in what has been called the epilogue to the Book of Job. Here we are told that Yahweh "restored the fortunes" of Job restoring all that he had lost and giving him twice as much as he had at the beginning. Preliminary to making things right with him, Yahweh has accepted Job's acknowledgment of his own shortcomings although, at the same time, he has condemned the three friends because of their unfair charges against him.[27] By making the story end in this fashion, it was possible to support the conventional interpretation of Job's prob-

[26] Sometimes a problem is answered by ignoring it. This is the only way in which these poems could be regarded as an answer to Job's problem. No attempt is made to explain the suffering of innocent persons.

[27] Job's acknowledgment which is recorded in 42:1-6 is a part of the later addition. It is not consistent with the ideas expressed by Job in the symposium.

lem. In the light of this addition the case of Job is to be regarded as just another instance in which Yahweh rewards with material prosperity those who serve him while punishment falls only on those who have done wrong. The fact that this conclusion is out of harmony with the main argument of the symposium and that it tends to support the charges made by Satan in the beginning of the prologue, seems to have been overlooked. If the purpose of the book had been nothing more than that of demonstrating the possibility of a human being serving Yahweh for other than selfish reasons, the experience of Job would have been adequate without the inclusion of the epilogue. If, as seems more likely, its purpose was that of challenging the explanation for suffering which had been offered by sages and prophets, then the inclusion of the epilogue was in direct conflict with it.

The Book of Ecclesiastes

The Book of Ecclesiastes is a treatise in which the author presents his views concerning the worth and significance of human life. The problem involved in the suffering of innocent people which had so deeply troubled the author of the original Book of Job, is taken into account by the writer of Ecclesiastes, but he takes a very different attitude toward it. He is well aware of the fact that righteous people do not always receive their just dues and he knows also that wicked people are frequently praised by their contemporaries and made the recipients of many of the pleasant things of life. But he is not disturbed by these facts. He accepts them as a matter of course and is resolved to make the best of it. He has become "disillusioned" concerning the rewards of living but he is not bitter about it. He may be a cynic but at least he is a gentle one.[28] He knows that life has only certain things to offer and he is neither discouraged nor downhearted because it offers no more. The wisdom of life, as he understands it, consists of learning to be content with those values which can be attained. Life may be vain and fruitless in many respects but we can still "eat, drink, enjoy," even though we are unable to obtain many of the things for which human beings are accustomed to strive.

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[28] "A Gentle Cynic" is the term used by Morris Jastrow to refer to the author of Ecclesiastes.

Although, by tradition, Ecclesiastes has been attributed to King Solomon, biblical scholars are unanimous in their belief that he did not write it. The book belongs to the late Persian period and was probably written not far from the date 200 B.C.[29] We know nothing of the author except what may be inferred from those statements in his book in which he speaks about his own personal experiences. These statements indicate that he was a man well-advanced in years and one who had been successful in winning those things usually regarded as constituting the chief values of human life.

The Hebrew title of the book was "Koheleth" a name which probably meant a collector or gatherer of words of wisdom. This name was translated into the Greek as "Ecclesiastes" which means a member of an assembly or one who addresses an assembly. English translators have rendered it as "the preacher" but there seems to be some doubt as to the accuracy of this translation.[30]

The association of the book with the name of Solomon is apparently due to two factors. First, the author of Ecclesiastes purports to be giving the experience and ideas of this man whose reputation for wisdom has been widely acclaimed. Second, there was a strong tendency among the later writers of the Old Testament to project their ideas into the past, thus gaining for them the prestige derived from association with the names of Israel's ancient heroes. We know of many instances in which this was done and there is nothing strange about attributing this procedure to the author of this book.

The fact that Ecclesiastes expresses ideas which are similar in content to the teachings of the Epicurean philosophers has led some critics to suppose the author of the book was influenced by the Greeks. However, we have no way of knowing whether this was true. By the time Ecclesiastes was written, the

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[29] See Julius A. Bewer, *The Literature of the Old Testament* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1924), p. 330.

[30] Some translations read "The words of the Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem."

Hebrews had experienced many opportunities for contact with Greek culture and it may be the author made use of this source. But it is also possible that he arrived at his convictions on the basis of his own experience.

A Denial of the Idea of Progress

The book opens with a direct attack upon some of the most cherished ideas of ordinary human beings. Chief among these is the belief that life is worth while. In contrast with this assumption, our author tells us "all is vanity" and, as one translation puts it, "a chasing after wind." Men are always pursuing aims which can never be realized. The world is full of weariness for the desires of human beings are never satisfied. It is like the river which continually flows into the sea and yet the sea never becomes full.[31] The more one sees, the more he wants to see. The more wealth one possesses the greater is his desire for more wealth. The more one pursues fame the less satisfied he becomes with the fame which he already possesses. A person may desire leisure and work for the greater part of his life in order to obtain it, but when he finally gets it he has lost the capacity to enjoy it. All this, he tells us, he has learned from his own experience. He has been a rich man. He owned vast estates which enabled him to purchase all the goods he wished. He had slaves and servants to wait on him and cater to his every wish. Still, he was not satisfied. He pronounced it all vanity and vexation of spirit. Again, he pursued pleasure with all the abandon that is characteristic of the typical pleasure seeker. He indulged his physical appetites to the full. Did he find satisfaction in so doing? No, he did not. As soon as he had obtained what he thought he wanted, he discovered that his desires had changed and he was just as unhappy as he had been before. The same thing was true with regard to his pursuit of wisdom. Being numbered among the sages or wise men, one might suppose he would find satisfaction through the processes of learning even though he was unable to do so by fulfilling the demands of his sensuous desires. But it was the same story over again.

[31] Eccles. 1:7-8.

The more one learns the more he becomes aware of his own ignorance. The quest for wisdom brings no more happiness than the pursuit of other ends. All is vanity.

Our author's cynicism is evident again in his remarks about progress. He did not accept the popular view that the world is getting better. The idea of progress through the course of human history has been a fairly common one among the people of the world. Nearly every generation has believed that it was making some advance over the preceding one. This was especially true of the Hebrew people. Their optimism with reference to the future was expressed in their messianic beliefs. For centuries they had looked forward to the time when a rule of justice and righteousness would be established on the earth. The realization of this hope had been delayed because they had not learned the lessons of obedience. But they were making progress toward that goal. It was this faith in the coming of a better day that the author of Ecclesiastes challenged:

> What has been is what will be,
> and what has been done is what will be done;
> and there is nothing new under the sun.
> Is there a thing of which it is said,
> "See, this is new"?
> It has been already,
> in the ages before us.
> There is no remembrance of former things,
> nor will there be any remembrance
> of later things yet to happen
> among those who come after.
> (Eccles. 1:9-11)

Each generation believes itself to be the best one that has existed, but this is due to the fact that former achievements have been forgotten. We may be just as sure that future generations will not remember the things that are being done now. From the most ancient times of which we have any record, attempts have been made to correct the evils that infest human society. Have these attempts been successful? No, the situation has not been improved in spite of all the efforts that have been expended. Whenever one ill has been removed another one has appeared in its place. A person is wise when at last he recognizes that he cannot set right the many wrongs that are in the world. "What is crooked cannot be made straight, and what is lacking cannot be numbered." [32]

Providence Does Not Interfere

Ecclesiastes knows as well as Job that suffering and pain are not distributed in accordance with the moral worth of the individuals that are involved. The righteous are not rewarded nor the wicked punished according to the demands of justice. "Moreover I saw under the sun that in the place of justice even there was wickedness, and in the place of righteousness, even there was wickedness." [33] The author is aware of the fact that some people expect justice in the matter of rewards and punishments to be realized in a future life. He does not, however, share this hope. The idea that human beings survive death in a manner that is not true of the beasts is, for him, an unwarranted one:

> For the fate of the sons of men and the fate of beasts is the same; as one dies, so dies the other. They all have the same breath, and man has no advantage over the beasts; for all is vanity. All go to one place; all are from the dust, and all turn to dust again. Who knows whether the spirit of man goes upward and the spirit of the beast goes down to the earth? (Eccl. 3:19-21)

When disasters occur, the righteous people are not spared any more than the wicked: "since one fate comes alike to all, to the righteous and the wicked, to the good and the evil." [34] Good people do not live on even in the minds of succeeding generations. Concerning a certain city, he writes, "there was found in it a poor wise man, and he by his wisdom delivered the city. Yet no one remembered that poor man." [35] No matter how people may live, there is one fate that comes to them all alike. They all die and future generations will remember them no more.

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[32] Eccles. 1:15.
[33] Eccles. 3:16.
[34] Eccles. 9:2.
[35] Eccles. 9:15.

> For the living know that they will die, but the dead know nothing, and they have no more reward; but the memory of them is lost. Their love and their hate and their envy have already perished, and they have no more for ever any share in all that is done under the sun. (Eccles. 9:5-6)

It is not a pleasant or beautiful picture of life that is portrayed. It is filled with one frustration after another. A man works long and hard in order to provide security for his old age, but when this time arrives he has lost the capacity for enjoying what he has accumulated. He may pass his wealth on to his children but they will waste it in riotous living and think no better of him for it. Because God has placed eternity in the hearts of people, they cannot be satisfied with transient goods and yet these are the only ones they can obtain.

In spite of these facts, our author does not believe life is altogether bad. If one does not expect the impossible, he can find much that will make life enjoyable and satisfying. In this respect he offers his readers some wise counsel. He tells them to avoid extremes in their manner of living. "Be not righteous overmuch, and do not make yourself overwise; why should you destroy yourself? Be not wicked overmuch, neither be a fool."[36] The wise course consists in following the path of moderation. Again, he advises against becoming unduly troubled about wickedness and corruption in high places. No individual needs to think that the responsibility for these conditions rests entirely upon him. Let the powers that are higher than himself worry about it. Besides, there is very little that he can do to change things. People should not place too much confidence in others and they should remember that riches and honor are to be enjoyed while one possesses them. It is a mistake for one to toil all his life in order to provide for enjoyment at some future date. Happiness consists not so much in getting the things you want as it does in learning to be happy with the things you already have. Wisdom is a good thing, primarily because it teaches one what not to expect. When the limitations of human existence are properly understood one can be reconciled with life and, without expecting anything more than he will receive, he can "eat, drink, and enjoy himself."

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[36] Eccles. 7:16-17.

Values of Ecclesiastes

In the light of the practical instruction which has been mentioned, one can see that this book is not without its values even though it expresses an attitude of scepticism toward many of the ideas that are usually cherished. For one thing, the frankness and candor with which the author states his position is something we cannot help but admire. We may not agree with his views but we respect him for the courage to say what he thinks when popular opinion is on the other side. It is better, he believes, to face the truth, unpleasant though it may be, than to trust in illusions.

The pleasures of life are not, in his judgment, dependent upon a providence which guarantees to each individual a just reward for what he has done. Neither do they depend upon a belief in a life beyond the grave. Without these beliefs it is possible to obtain a great deal of enjoyment from life's experiences. Furthermore, he insists that one ought to take advantage of the opportunities for enjoyment whenever they arise. This does not mean one should spend his time in riotous living or in the pursuit of those ends which have little if any chance of being realized. Rather, it means he should cultivate those pleasures which accompany prudent living. Pleasures of this type are really God's gift to human beings and they should be regarded as such. It is especially important for one to find happiness during the time of his youth. In old age one loses the capacity for enjoyment. He grows weary in mind as well as in body.

These values which are emphasized in the book must have gone a long way toward commending Ecclesiastes to its readers. It is doubtful, however, if these values would in themselves have been sufficient to have the book preserved and included in the canon of the Scriptures. The notes of scepticism and cynicism were too strong to win favor with those who accepted more orthodox views. In view of the unpopular character of its teachings, there was only one way the book could be saved for later generations. That was by the addition of materials which would make possible an interpretation of its contents that would not be offensive to more conservative minds. There is every reason to believe that additions of this type were made to the original document. Just how many of the statements now included in Ecclesiastes were later additions is not known with certainty. We can, however, be reasonably sure they include the statement found at the beginning of Chapter 12, "Remember also your Creator in the days of your youth" and the last two verses of the same chapter which read,

> The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil. (Eccles. 12:13-14)

Proverbs

The Book of Proverbs is a collection of short sayings gathered and preserved by Israel's sages over a long period of time. The sayings cover a wide range of topics and they come from a variety of different sources including some that were of non-Hebraic origin. Taken together they constitute a handbook of conduct or, as we might say at the present time, a textbook in ethics. Some of the proverbs in this collection are very old, going back as far as the time of King Solomon or in some instances to an even earlier date. It is quite possible that Solomon may have written some of these proverbs himself although there is no convincing evidence that this is true. His connection with the book now associated with his name is probably due to the fact that he gave support to the ones who were collecting and preserving these bits of wisdom.

The main portion of our present Book of Proverbs consists of four divisions. The first of these contains nine chapters which appear at the beginning of the book. They include a series of addresses in which warnings are given against various forms of vice, and wisdom is praised as a proper goal and guide for living. The second division begins with Chapter 10 and continues to the 16th verse of Chapter 22. This section, like the one preceding it, is given the title "Proverbs of Solomon" but its content is quite distinct especially in the form in which it is presented, the couplet being used in most instances. The third section which follows immediately is introduced by the words, "Incline your ear, and hear the words of the wise." Most of the proverbs in this section are in the form of quatrains. The fourth section includes Chapters 25 to 29. It is entitled "These also are proverbs of Solomon which the men of Hezekiah king of Judah copied." To these four sections there have been added three appendices. The first one is called "The words of Agur son of Yakeh of Massa." The second is attributed to King Lemuel of Massa and is said to contain the words which his mother taught him. The third and last one is an alphabetical poem in praise of a virtuous woman.

The Sages' Conception of Wisdom

Throughout the Book of Proverbs wisdom is mentioned only in terms of the highest praise. In the first section we find, for example,

do not forget, and do not turn away from the words of my mouth.
  Get wisdom; get insight.
Do not forsake her, and she will keep you;
  love her, and she will guard you.
The beginning of wisdom is this: Get wisdom,
  and whatever you get, get insight.
Prize her highly, and she will exalt you;
  she will honor you if you embrace her.
(Prov. 4:5-8)

The wisdom to which the author refers is, in one sense, a human achievement. It is the kind of understanding which one acquires through the processes of correct thinking. It is also something more than that. It is a characteristic of the divine nature. The prophets had taught that God was an intelligent being who formed the world in accordance with an orderly plan. Hence, wisdom, as it was used by the sages, had reference to this plan and the attempt on the part of human beings to live in harmony with it. Sometimes they spoke of wisdom as a person to whom one's loyalty and devotion should be directed. This does not mean they regarded wisdom as an individual who was separate and distinct from God. It was rather a literary device which they used to emphasize their conviction that God was a reasonable being, and hence the exercise of sound judgment on the part of human beings was one of the best ways in which to express their loyalty to him. It was through wisdom, they declared, that God had created the world.[37] Nature was an orderly process and even in the realm of the spirit things do not happen by chance. There is a reason for everything that takes place and the wise man will endeavor to understand the principles that are involved and thus come to regulate his own life in accordance with them.

Wisdom was regarded by the sages as both a means and an end in the achievement of a good life. It was a means insofar as it enabled an individual to foresee the consequences of alternative courses of action. In the light of this knowledge he could choose those things that would bring about the more lasting satisfactions. Wisdom was also an appropriate goal or end of action since the mere possession of it was in itself one of the greatest values life had to offer. In comparison with wisdom, other objectives in life were of minor importance. Riches, honor, fame, and pleasure could never bring one the satisfaction and enjoyment that comes from this source. Pleasures of the mind were, according to the sages, always superior to the satisfactions which come from the fulfilment of sensuous desires. Through wisdom man attained his goal. "Happy is the man who finds wisdom, and the man who gets understanding, for the gain from it is better than gain from silver and its profit better than gold. She is more precious than jewels, and nothing you desire can compare with her." [38]

In the light of this high praise of wisdom, it might be supposed these teachers were anxious to have their pupils think for themselves. Evidently this was not the case. Their method of instruction consisted of passing on from one generation to another the wisdom which they had received from their predecessors. The use of proverbs and maxims pertaining to conduct was especially useful for this purpose. Lessons originally derived from the experience of many people over a long period of time could be expressed in short proverbs that were easily memorized. In this way the ideas and conventions of a given period could be transmitted to another generation without any significant change. The more times this would be done the greater would be the prestige that was attached to them. Doctrines that have been handed down from ancient times usually possess an authority that does not belong to ideas that are comparatively new. The sages wanted to conserve the wisdom that had been gathered over the centuries and hence they tried to preserve what they had learned, rather than cultivate a critical attitude of mind which might call in question the validity of the teachings they had received.

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[37] Prov. 3:19.
[38] Prov. 3:13-15.

The pursuit of wisdom was believed to be a possibility for everyone although the sages must have recognized that some persons have a greater capacity for learning than others. Still, they believed, it was up to each individual to make the best use of whatever abilities he happened to possess. They were confident that God would reward him for so doing. This belief in rewards and punishments as an incentive to moral virtue was not original with the authors of the wisdom literature. The prophets had, long before, taught a similar doctrine with respect to the nations of the world. But with the possible exception of the prophets Ezekiel and Jeremiah, it was the sages who were most active in applying this principle to the field of individual living. They taught that God would reward, in a material way, those who made the proper use of their abilities. On the other hand, he was sure to punish those who failed to use their opportunities in the right way. It was the lazy person, along with the stupid and the slothful, who were displeasing to God. He would see to it that such persons would come to want, or, at any rate, that they were deprived of those social and economic advantages given to the more deserving.

That there is some truth in this doctrine of retribution no one who has observed life very widely can deny. Still, it is a very easy matter to carry this principle too far. This is what some of the sages seem to have done. At times, they appear to condemn anyone who is poor or in distress on the ground that it must be his own fault. Otherwise, such an experience would never have come to him. Apparently, these writers were not aware of the argument presented in the symposium of the Book of Job. They either did not know or disregarded the instances of suffering in this world for which the afflicted persons are not to blame. No recognition of this fact is asserted in the Book of Proverbs. The authors seem to take it for granted that happiness and goodness belong together and that God gives to individuals here and now a just recompense for the deeds they have performed. This was an ancient belief and it is easy to understand the sages' acceptance of it. How could they have reasoned otherwise so long as they held to the idea of a just and powerful God whose rewards and punishments were not to be meted out in a future life?

The Ethical Teaching of the Sages

Much of the practical wisdom with which the sages were concerned had to do with the conduct of individuals in the affairs of daily living. Although some of the maxims they recorded seem to be nothing more than matters of ordinary prudence, they advocated, on the whole, a very high standard of personal ethics. The wise man, whom they also regarded as the good man, is described as one who looks to the future and makes his plans for the present in the light of it. He does not squander his time or his money on mere pleasures of the moment but he selects as the object of his activities something that will bring more lasting satisfactions. He is a hard worker who realizes the value of honest labor and who does not try to gain his livelihood by infringing on the rights of other people. He is diligent in his business, courteous to customers and friends, and one who governs well the affairs of his own household. He knows how to control his temper and he guards well the words that he speaks. He avoids boasting and he always conducts himself with modesty and good taste. He does not indulge in idle gossip nor does he meddle in the affairs of others when they are of no direct concern to him. He refrains from the use of strong drink and he does not keep company with prostitutes or lewd companions. He respects the rights of others. He is kind toward those who are less fortunate than himself. He is generous in his giving although he does not lavish wealth on those who have failed to make proper efforts to supply their own needs. He respects the rulers of the land for he knows that government is essential to human welfare. He knows too that "righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people." [39]

The sages recognized more than one motive that prompted such action. In the first place they did not hesitate to appeal to the selfish interests of individuals. It may be they did this because they were aware of the strength that this motive possesses for the average person. Everyone does pursue his own interest at times and it is not impossible that under these circumstances he acts in harmony with the interests of others, and with the will of God. Whenever this is true the appeal to selfishness could be both legitimate and effective. Whether the sages reasoned in this manner concerning their appeal to selfish interests we do not know. At any rate, they did have another reason for making this type of appeal. They believed that God rewarded goodness here and now with the things which people usually desire. For instance, they held that the pursuit of wisdom enables one to live for a long time and to acquire material prosperity. "Long life is in her right hand; in her left hand are riches and honor." [40] The spirit of liberality, they believed, would add to one's possessions rather than diminish them. "A liberal man will be enriched, and one who waters will himself be watered." [41] The man who has pity on the poor will, in the long run, receive more than he gives. "He who is kind to the poor lends to the Lord, and he will repay him for his deed." [42] Righteous conduct will bring freedom from want. It will give an individual wealth and honor. It will enable him to have a good reputation, a blessed memory, power over others, a happy home life, good health, and a host of other things to be desired.

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[39] Prov. 14:34.
[40] Prov. 3:16.
[41] Prov. 11:25.
[42] Prov. 19:17.

Although the appeal to selfish motives is strong throughout the Proverbs, the interests of other people or altruistic motives are also taken into account. The sages recognized as clearly as anyone has ever done that human beings do not live in isolation from one another. The welfare of any individual is closely related to the experience of those with whom he lives. In the light of this fact, it is a good thing, they taught, for a person to bring happiness to another. This is true quite apart from the pleasures which one may derive from the act for himself. To gladden the heart of one's father or mother is a commendable act. In the same spirit one should strive to speak words which will help and sustain his neighbor rather than bring heaviness and sorrow to his heart. Good words will be a fountain of life to those who receive them. Talebearing and idle gossip are to be avoided because of the injury which they inflict on others. Righteous conduct on the part of an individual will strengthen the nation to which he belongs. Truthfulness and justice in one's business relationships are not only good policy for the person who follows them but they promote the welfare of other people. For this reason also they are to be regarded as good. It is true that in all these instances the selfish motive is never entirely eliminated but its presence does not mean the exclusion of other motives. As a general rule the two motives of egoism and altruism may function in a manner that enables each to supplement the other. The conflicts which arise in view of the present or immediate interests often disappear when future or more distant consequences are taken into account. Of course there are many instances in the ordinary course of living where it is impossible to reconcile these two motives and the individual must choose between them. Instances of this type are not discussed in Proverbs.

The love of God as a motive for action is not as prominent in the Book of Proverbs as it is in other parts of the Old Testament. Nevertheless, there are many passages which contain references to it. We have noted that God is frequently spoken of as a rewarder of good deeds but we must not suppose the sages' interest in him was limited to this one factor. God was conceived by them as the creator of the world and the one who was responsible for the beauty and goodness it contained. He was the ruler and also the judge of mankind. It was only by living in harmony with his precepts that man could fulfil the higher possibilities of his nature. One of the most important things about obeying the will of God is the recognition on the part of human beings that they are measured by a standard superior to themselves and which is therefore something more than the mere opinions of individuals or the customs of society. It was with this conception in mind that the sages wrote, "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction."[43] The love of Yahweh toward his people is set forth in these following words, "My son, do not despise the LORD's discipline or be weary of his reproof, for the LORD reproves him whom he loves, as a father the son in whom he delights."[44]

Although Proverbs encourages loyalty to Yahweh, it is quite evident that the authors expected this loyalty to be expressed in terms of ethical conduct. There is no interest in the rites and ceremonies which formed such an important part of the worship conducted in the temple. While God would reward persons for a high standard of ethical living, he would not dispense wealth, honor, long life, or security in exchange for services which pertained merely to the ritual. The ideal person, from the point of view of this book, was the man who feared God and who as a result of his industry, integrity, and sound judgment had acquired enough goods to provide security for himself and family, maintaining at the same time the respect and confidence of his fellow-men.

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[43] Prov. 1:7.

[44] Prov. 3:11-12.

Chapter 16

SHORT STORIES IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

The historical narrative, long recognized as an important literary device, has often been used for the expression of some of the most significant ideas of a given period of time or race of people. It is not at all strange that this device should have been employed by some of the authors of the Old Testament. It provided for them an effective medium through which they could present ideas which had stirred their own souls and which they regarded as essential for the well-being of others. The prophets had used different literary forms for the proclamation of their messages. After a time the period of prophecy came to a close. A "thus says the LORD" was no longer adequate to gain the attention and loyalty of the people. It was assumed that although Yahweh had spoken directly to men in times past he did not communicate with individuals in that manner any more. Hence, for those who believed they had a message from Yahweh, it was necessary to find a new means for expressing it. The historical narrative provided an excellent answer to this need. The author could simply tell a story which would illustrate the idea he had in mind. By carefully constructing his story he could appeal to the imagination of people and make them realize the importance of his message when other methods of presentation would probably fail.

The use of stories to illustrate important moral and religious lessons can be found in many parts of the Old Testament but there is one book in which the use of this literary device reaches its highest pinnacle of achievement.[1] It is the Book of Jonah.

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[1] Illustrations of stories used for this purpose may be seen in many of the narratives recorded in the *J* and *E* histories. For example, the story of the bramble bush that wanted to be king, the story of Aaron and the golden calf, the sacrifice of Isaac, the story of Gideon, etc.

Although this book has often been classified with the minor prophets, it does not belong to this group of writings. The author was not a prophet but someone who wrote a story about a prophet. The story has to do with the experiences of Jonah, the son of Amittai.[2] It was designed to teach an important lesson about the attitude of the Hebrews toward foreign nations. It indicates that the author was sympathetic with the ideals of the prophets, particularly those which had been proclaimed by Deutero-Isaiah.[3] His story makes the nationalism of the Hebrews appear in a most unfavorable light and it lends strong support to the belief that Yahweh cares as much about foreigners as he does his own particular people. It is in this book that the spirit of internationalism finds its noblest expression.

The Book of Ruth is another historical narrative which carries the implication that the Hebrews are not so much better than their foreign neighbors. It contains a mild protest against the enforcement of the law which forbade Hebrews to intermarry with people who did not belong to their own national or religious group. The charm of the story and the delightful style in which it is written makes it seem improbable that the author's main purpose was to teach a lesson concerning internationalism. He wrote because he liked to tell stories and because he possessed the artistic temperament that enabled him to do it with a beauty and skill that is unsurpassed.[4]

It was a different purpose that inspired the author of the Book of Esther. There is no trace of the spirit of internationalism in this book nor can we say the story is noted for its charm or beauty of expression. In some respects it is a very strange book to be included in the canon of the Old Testament. The motive which lies back of it can scarcely be called religious. The name of Yahweh is not mentioned and no attempt is made to set forth any spiritual ideals or moral precepts.[5] It is true that the average reader of this book will have respect and admiration for Queen Esther when she risks her own life in order to save her people, but he will also realize that this act of courage and loyalty on her part is not the main point of the story. It is rather the clever way in which the Jews escape persecution and finally achieve a great victory over their enemies that is given the major emphasis. An understanding of these three historical stories calls for an analysis of each book.

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[2] See Jonah 1:1 and II Kings 14:25. Evidently a prophet named Jonah had lived during the times of Amos but we can be sure this man was not the hero of the Book of Jonah.

[3] This is especially true with reference to Deutero-Isaiah's teaching about the future of the foreign nations.

[4] The moral lesson of the book is certainly one of the most important of its characteristics, although it seems quite likely that the author did not write it for the sake of teaching this lesson.

Jonah

The setting for the story is placed in the days of Jeroboam II who reigned in Israel at the time when Amos delivered his prophecies concerning the approaching captivity of the land. Jonah, the son of Amittai, was also a prophet but unlike his contemporary he had no message of criticism for his own people. On the contrary, he is presented as one of those self-satisfied prophets who could see no wrong in the affairs of his own country or appreciate anything good in the conduct of other peoples. He was especially critical of the Ninevites and desired to have no contact with them. So far as he was concerned, they could all be destroyed. He saw no reason why Yahweh should care for them either since they had long been regarded as the chief enemies of the Hebrew people.

According to the story Yahweh told Jonah to go to this city of Nineveh, the capital of the Assyrian empire, and there proclaim a message concerning the wickedness of the people who dwelt within it.[6] But Jonah did not want to go to Nineveh. He tried to run away from his responsibility and to this end he went down to Joppa and boarded a ship sailing for Tarshish. His disobedience to Yahweh is indicated by the fact that he went in the opposite direction from that in which he had been told to go. Instead of going east toward Nineveh, he started as far west as it would be possible for him to travel. As soon as he was on board he went down into the hold of the ship and was soon fast asleep. According to one translation of the story he snored very loudly.[7] In the meantime, Yahweh had caused a great storm to come up and the ship was in danger of being wrecked. The men in charge of the boat cast lots to determine who was responsible for the miserable plight in which they had been placed. When the lot fell on Jonah they awakened him and asked for an explanation. Jonah replied by telling them the whole story of his attempt to run away from Yahweh. When they asked what they should do in order to save themselves from the ravages of the storm, he told them to cast him into the sea and then the storm would cease. After some hesitation, they followed his instructions and cast him overboard, and then the sea became calm.

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[5] Sometimes the name "Yahweh" was omitted because it was considered sacrilegious to pronounce it. This does not seem to be true of the Book of Esther.

[6] Jonah 1:2.

Although Jonah's conduct had been such that he did not deserve to be saved, Yahweh had prepared a great fish to swallow him alive. In the belly of this fish he continued to live for three days and nights. During this time he repented the course which he had followed and prayed to Yahweh for deliverance. His prayer was answered by Yahweh who caused the fish to vomit him unharmed upon dry land.[8] After this experience he was told again to go to Nineveh and proclaim the message which had been given to him. This time he obeyed. It required three days of travel for him to reach the city. Upon his arrival he told the inhabitants of the city: "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!"[9]

The reaction of the Ninevites to his message was the surprising factor in his story. They believed Jonah and immediately repented the evil of which they had been guilty. Even the king of the city, as soon as he learned about Jonah's message, put off his royal robes and clothed himself with sackcloth and sat in ashes.[10] He called upon his people to fast and to pray mightily to God in the hope that his anger would be turned and the city would be spared.

How did Jonah feel about this wholesale repentance on the part of the Ninevites? Did he rejoice because they had given heed to his message? He did not. He was thinking primarily about himself and the effect it would have on his reputation as a prophet if the destruction which he had prophesied did not come to pass. He didn't want it to appear that his predictions had failed. He would rather see the whole city destroyed than to have that happen. His own prestige was a matter of greater importance to him than the fate of the people to whom he had been sent. He was so disappointed over the turn of events that he longed to die. In this frame of mind he went out to the east side of the city and made a booth in which he could sit while waiting to see what was going to happen. Yahweh took pity on him and prepared a gourd which grew up in a single night and provided shade for his comfort. When the gourd died the following night Jonah began once more to bemoan the fate which had befallen him. At this point Yahweh lost patience with him and spoke harshly in an effort to bring him to his senses.

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[7] Jonah 1:5.
[8] Jonah 2:10.
[9] Jonah 3:4.
[10] Jonah 3:5-6.

> And the Lord said, "You pity the plant, for which you did not labor, not did you make it grow, which came into being in a night, and perished in a night. And should not I pity Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand persons who do not know their right hand from their left, and also much cattle?" (Jonah 4:10-11)

Historical Background of the Book

There is now general agreement among Old Testament scholars that the Book of Jonah is one of the late writings that appeared sometime near the end of the fourth century. One of the indications that it belongs to this period can be seen in the references which are made to the city of Nineveh. It is spoken of as a city which flourished a long time ago but is now almost forgotten. Even the name of the king who lived there is not remembered. Obviously the events which are related are supposed to belong to the distant past.

Although there was a prophet who was known as Jonah, the son of Amittai, who lived during the reign of Jeroboam II, we can be sure that the Jonah of this story was a creation of the author's imagination. His purpose was not to record the history of some individual but rather to portray an attitude that he had recognized on the part of the Jewish people. Because he had a certain message that he wanted to present, he created a character who would be suited to the purpose which he had in mind. Why, then, we might ask, did he want Jonah to appear as a selfish and narrow-minded nationalist who tried to run away from Yahweh and who behaved so badly after his experience in being delivered from the sea? The answer is that he wanted the Jewish people to see themselves in the actions which Jonah had performed. It was for this reason that he created a character who behaved in a manner very much like the way they had been acting for a long period of time. If they could only see themselves as they must appear to others and to Yahweh, then there would be some hope of a reformation.

During the Babylonian exile Deutero-Isaiah had indicated that the great mission of the Jewish people was to carry true religion to the ends of the earth.[11] They were Yahweh's chosen people only in the sense that they had been selected to suffer for others. They were the servant nation but in the end those who lived in the foreign countries would be converted and Yahweh would recognize all of them as his own people. Without doubt many of those who returned to the homeland from Babylon were inspired by this ideal but during the years which followed, the spirit of internationalism had practically disappeared. The gulf between Jew and Gentile had grown wider and the leaders of the Hebrew state no longer entertained the idea that they were a missionary people who should try to bring salvation to the other nations of the world. Instead, they came to think of themselves as morally superior to others. They were Yahweh's chosen people and they must not become like the nations round about them. The policy which they adopted was one of exclusiveness. They must safeguard all the rites and ceremonies pertaining to their own religion and make sure they did not become contaminated with the beliefs and practices of foreigners.[12]

This attitude on the part of the Jews toward other nations had been derived in part from the teachings of the prophet Ezekiel.[13] It will be remembered that during the Exile he had predicted a glorious future for the Hebrews but at the same time he foresaw nothing but destruction for all foreign nations. As soon as the captivity would be over, Yahweh would dwell with his own people in the restored city of Jerusalem and the new kingdom would be established forever. In the meantime, the foreign nations would look with envious eyes upon this state and would assemble a great and mighty army to march upon Jerusalem and overthrow it. But they would not succeed. At the critical moment, Yahweh would descend upon them and annihilate their forces. The foreign nations were enemies of Yahweh and they would never repent. Consequently, there was no use in trying to save them. The only hope for the future was contingent upon their destruction.

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[11] Isa. 42:1-4.

[12] This attitude is well-illustrated in the law codes of the Old Testament. It is present in the Deuteronomic Code but is emphasized even more in the Holiness Code and again in the Priestly Code.

The spirit of Ezekiel's teaching was especially strong during the post-Exilic period. It was reinforced from time to time by the teaching of different minor prophets who sought to interpret contemporary events. When the material prosperity which had been expected did not arrive it was their task to explain why it had not come. As a general rule they were able to find some way in which to place the blame upon the foreign nations. Either they had proved themselves to be a menace to the welfare of the Hebrews by launching a direct attack upon them, or they had infiltrated the people and contaminated them with false ideas and heathen customs. The only remedy which the prophets could suggest was to purge their own people of these foreign elements, and then the Hebrew culture would be restored to its former purity. Further, they would have to wait for Yahweh to take the initiative in ridding the earth of these enemies of righteousness. By the end of the fourth century this nationalism had become the dominant mood throughout the Jewish state. There is nothing strange about this attitude. It was quite like the spirit of nationalism which characterizes many of the states in our modern world. It is not at all uncommon, even today, for a great nation to regard itself as morally superior to any other country in the world and to believe that peace and security for all men can come only when the enemy nations have been subdued and conquered.

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[13] Ezek. 38, 39.

The Message of the Book

Whenever the spirit of nationalism reaches that extreme where the people who live in a given country can see nothing but goodness in themselves and nothing but evil in the actions of others, it is quite natural for someone to enter a protest. This is precisely what the author of Jonah did in the story that he wrote. He wanted to bring the narrowness and prejudice of his own people out into the open so that it might be seen for the evil thing that it was. The creation of the story of Jonah was an excellent means for accomplishing this purpose. Every important item in the story brought to light a similar experience on the part of the Hebrew people. Jonah's reluctance to go to Nineveh was comparable to the attitude of the Hebrews in regard to the commission which Yahweh had given to them. He had wanted them to be a "light for the Gentiles" and to bring salvation "to the uttermost parts of the earth." They had been unwilling to accept this responsibility. They had preferred to stay in their own land enjoying the comforts that had been given to them and refusing to be concerned about the welfare of other nations. It had never occurred to them that foreigners might be worth as much in the sight of Yahweh as themselves. Like the Jonah of the story they had tried to run away from Yahweh. Their behavior had been just the opposite of what they had been told to do.[14]

One of the lessons which the author had in mind was the impossibility of defeating Yahweh's purpose through the failure of individuals or even a nation to cooperate with his plans. Jonah disobeyed Yahweh and got into serious trouble that would have cost him his life had not Yahweh intervened in his behalf. The Hebrew people had been through a similar experience. Their disobedience had brought on their captivity by a foreign power. Had it not been for Yahweh's action in their behalf the whole nation would have perished in the Babylonian exile. But just as the fish of the story brought Jonah safely to land, so, in the course of time, the Hebrews were allowed to come back to their former home.

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[14] Their behavior is symbolized in the story when Jonah goes in the opposite direction from which he had been told to go.

Jonah did not learn very much from his experience in the sea, and neither did the Hebrews profit as they should have done from the Babylonian captivity. After their return they were as narrow-minded and nationalistic in their attitudes as they had been before. In the story, Jonah did go down to Nineveh when Yahweh called upon him the second time but the only message which he had for the people who lived there was one of the coming destruction which would be brought upon them because of their sins. It was the same way with the Hebrew people. After their experience in Babylon they did have a message for the foreign nations. It was the message which Exekiel had taught and it was proclaimed again and again by the post-Exilic prophets.[15] It was always an announcement of the approaching doom which Yahweh was soon to bring upon them. Jonah had not expected the Ninevites to respond to his message. The idea of their repentance was contrary to his way of thinking. When they did repent, he did not like it. Instead, he bemoaned the fact that his predictions had not been fulfilled. The story concerning the gourd which came up in one night and perished in another indicated that Jonah was a thoroughly selfish individual whose major interest was his own personal comfort rather than the salvation of other persons. All of this was similar to the attitude which the Jews had taken toward the foreign nations. They did not see any good in the nations which had long been regarded as the enemies of the Hebrew people. They did not believe the people who belonged to these nations would repent. They had predicted that Yahweh would destroy them and they would have preferred rather to have their predictions fulfilled than to see the nations repent and be saved.

Yahweh's rebuke to Jonah for disregarding the welfare of vast numbers of persons while centering attention upon himself was intended as a lesson to the Jewish people. The message of the book is, however, one that is capable of a much wider application. It is a protest against the spirit of nationalism whenever and wherever it assumes the form the author had recognized among his own people. Any nation which assumes an attitude of provincial superiority to the other peoples of the earth and regards the deity as interested in its welfare at the expense of foreign nations needs to appropriate to itself the lesson of the Book of Jonah.

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[15] This attitude toward the foreign nations was not confined to the prophets. It was even more pronounced in the work of the priests and the lawgivers.

Ruth

In the Book of Jonah the story of the prophet and his experiences is important only as a means of teaching a lesson concerning international relationships. It is just the other way round in the Book of Ruth. The spirit of friendliness in international relationships finds expression in the book but it is not the main point of the story. The moral lesson which it contains is incidental to the story itself. One does not get the impression from reading it that the author was writing for the specific purpose of setting his people straight on an important controversial issue. He does not avoid references to moral problems but he makes use of them only when they contribute to the story that he has in mind. The author is primarily a writer rather than a teacher. He knows how to tell a story that will grip the imagination and interest of his readers and this was his main purpose in writing the book.

Although there is some disagreement among biblical scholars concerning the time when this book was written, we are fairly safe in placing it at about the end of the fifth century or possibly a little later than that date. The setting of the story is the days of the Judges which preceded the establishment of the monarchy, but this period of time is regarded by the author as belonging to the remote past. This is indicated by two references found in Chapter 4. One of these has to do with the custom of removing one's shoe in attestation of a legal transaction.[16] Evidently, the author finds it necessary to explain this custom since it belonged to ancient times and his readers are not likely to be familiar with it. The other reference is the genealogy found at the end of the chapter. The inclusion of these names would imply that a long time has elapsed since the occurrence of the events related.

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[16] Ruth 4:7.

There is an additional reason for giving a relatively late date for the writing of this book. It has to do with the subject of intermarriage between Jews and Gentiles. In the story of Ruth such marriages take place and Yahweh does not disapprove of them. Daughters of the Moabites become wives of Hebrew young men, and they are as devoted and loyal to their husbands as any of the Hebrew women. These particular items in the story were especially appropriate during the later centuries of the post-Exilic period. At this time the problem of intermarriage was a controversial issue and the suggestion that Yahweh, in ancient times, had sanctioned marriages between Hebrews and foreigners would have an important bearing on the question.

The situation among the Hebrews with reference to this problem is described in the closing chapters of the Book of Nehemiah.[17] When Ezra and Nehemiah had assumed leadership of the restored community of Jewish people, they found conditions in a deplorable state. The worship of Yahweh was being neglected and there seemed to be little interest in a preservation of the distinctive elements of the Jewish religion. Blame for this unfortunate state of affairs was placed, at least in part, on the fact that during the Exile Jews who remained in Palestine had intermarried with foreigners. In order to correct matters an attempt was now made to put an end to this practice. The law forbidding intermarriages was enforced and those who had already married foreigners were required to divorce their partners or leave the community. We read, for example, that one of the sons of Jehoiada, who was also a grandson of the high priest, had married the daughter of Sanballat, the Horonite. When he refused to get a divorce, Nehemiah chased him out of the community. It was after this experience that Sanballat constructed another temple at Mount Gerazim to rival the one that the Jews had at Jerusalem.

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[17] Neh. 13:23-30.

The enforcement of this law requiring Jews who had married foreigners to obtain a divorce must have caused many hardships. It meant the breaking up of homes and the severance of those ties around which the values of life are usually built. In spite of the sorrows and heartaches that were involved many of the Jews conformed to the requirement placed upon them. But there were some who questioned the wisdom of this law. They were not sure that Yahweh required it of them. In the case of those homes where the marriage had been a happy one, was it not better for the family to remain together? Because we know about a reaction of this kind which existed during the later years of the post-Exilic period, it is quite reasonable to suppose that the author of the Book of Ruth was one who shared this opinion. Although he was not writing for the specific purpose of counteracting the law which forbade foreign marriages, his own conviction in the matter is set forth in the details of the story. If Yahweh had approved of foreign marriages in the past, he could not be so vigorously opposed to them now as the enforcement of this law would seem to indicate.

The Story of Ruth

From the point of view of literature, Ruth is the most charming of the short stories found in the Old Testament. Literary critics have given to it the highest praise. Quite apart from any moral or religious lesson which it contains, it illustrates a high standard in the art of storytelling. It still remains a classic in this field.

The plot of the story belongs to the period of the Judges, a time long since passed, when it would appear that the Israelites were living on friendly terms with their neighbors the Moabites.[18] A famine occurred in Israel. In order to escape from it, a certain Hebrew named Elimelech took his wife Naomi and their two sons, Mahlon and Chilion, and journeyed into the land of the Moabites. They were received kindly by the people among whom they had gone to live and there was no desire on their part to return to their former home. After the death of

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[18] Ruth 1:1-5.

Elimelech each of the sons married a daughter of the Moabites. The two wives were known respectively as Ruth and Orpah. Both of them were women of excellent character. When their husbands had died in Moab, Noami, the Hebrew mother-in-law, decided to return to Israel so that she might spend the rest of her days among her own people. Before starting on her journey she talked to her daughters-in-law and implored them to remain among their people in the land of Moab. It is at this point in the story that the faithfulness of these Moabite wives to their Hebrew husbands is especially evident. They tell Naomi they will not remain behind when she goes back to her former home. They will go with her and become a part of the people with whom she dwells. After being entreated to do so, Orpah finally decides to remain in Moab but Ruth will not agree to any separation from her mother-in-law and the people of Israel. Her statement to Naomi is a marvelous example of loyalty and devotion.

> But Ruth said, "Entreat me not to leave you or to return from following you; for where you go I will go, and where you lodge I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God my God; where you die I will die, and there will I be buried. May the Lord do so to me and more also if even death parts me from you." (Ruth 1:16-17)

Following this declaration of loyalty to her husband's people, Ruth accompanies her mother-in-law in her journey back to Israel. The two women arrived at Bethlehem during the early part of the harvest season. They went immediately into the fields in order that they might glean the scattered fragments of grain which had been overlooked by the reapers. Before long they came to a field owned by Boaz, a wealthy kinsman of Elimelech, or Ruth's father-in-law. When the owner of the field saw the two women and learned that one of them was Ruth, the daughter-in-law of Naomi, he gave orders to the workmen to treat them kindly and to make sure that plenty of grain was left behind for them to glean. As the end of the harvest season grew near Boaz spent more time in the fields. This gave Ruth an opportunity to win his heart so that he was led to ask for her hand in marriage. Then follows an account of a legal transaction in which a nearer kinsman renounced his right and duty to purchase the field of Naomi and to marry the daughter. This transaction was attested by the ceremony of taking off one's shoe, a custom which, according to the author, had been in vogue a long time ago. Some time after this ceremony Boaz married Ruth. When a son was born to them they named him Obed. It was this son who, in the course of time, became the grandfather of King David.[19]

Values of the Book of Ruth

That the Book of Ruth was included in the canon of Old Testament writings is a clear indication of the high esteem in which it was held by succeeding generations. That the story itself was a work of art is something that cannot be denied. For this reason alone it would have deserved to be classified with the great literary productions of the Hebrew people. But we may be sure that its inclusion in the list of sacred writings was due to something more than the literary beauty of the story. It was valued for the ideas concerning social relationships which were expressed in it. It is also true that people came to regard the book, not as a piece of fiction, but as a historical account of early relationships between Israelites and the Moabites.[20]

With reference to the historical aspect of the book, we may be sure that the author had no intention of producing an accurate account of actual happenings. His interpretation of the levirate marriage law is not in accord with the record which we find in the book of Deuteronomy.[21] Neither do we have any evidence outside this book of the early Israelites living on such friendly terms with Moabite neighbors. One would not get an impression of this kind from reading the Book of Judges. It is quite evident that the author was not writing history. He was telling a story and he took whatever liberties were necessary in order to make the kind of story he wanted.

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[19] Ruth 4:13-17.

[20] It is probably for this reason that the book was given its present position in the canon of the Old Testament.

[21] Deut. 25:5-10.

The most important implication of the story has to do with the problem of intermarriage between Jews and Gentiles. If it were true that Yahweh had approved foreign marriages in the past, it would not be right to regard it as such a terrible sin for Jews of a later date. In the light of the story of Ruth, there could be no justification for a law which insisted that all mixed marriages be dissolved. Yahweh was not interested in purity of Jewish blood nearly as much as the leaders of the Jewish community. Had he not blessed the union of Boaz and Ruth? It was from this union that King David had descended, and it was generally believed that the Messiah would come from the line of David. Surely, in view of these considerations, the current opposition to foreign marriages must be ill-founded. It could not have Yahweh's sanction.

Esther

Patriotism rather than religion seems to be the dominant theme of the Book of Esther. It is another historical story but unlike the preceding ones, Jonah and Ruth, it was not written in the interest of an international ideal nor does it teach any important lesson in the field of morals or religion. We may in fact think of it as a purely secular piece of writing. The name of the deity is not mentioned in it and there is nothing about it which would inspire loyalty to the particular tenets of the Jewish faith. In contrast with Jonah and Ruth, it is strongly nationalistic in spirit. Apparently it was written for the purpose of glorifying a military victory which the Jews had achieved over their enemies, and to explain the origin of the Feast of Purim.[22]

As to the date of writing it is impossible to determine with certainty even the period when the author lived and wrote. The best we can do is to locate the time in Jewish history when the spirit of this book would reflect the popular attitude of the people. The first half of the second century seems to meet this condition better than any other period. The Maccabean wars were over and the Jewish state was enjoying a brief period of independence.

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[22] Esther 9:26-32.

Religious interests had waned and people were moved by a spirit of revenge for the terrible things which they had suffered at the hand of their persecutors. The era of John Hyrcanus would seem to be an appropriate time for the writing of this book or sometime not far from the year 135 B.C.

The Story of Esther

The setting of the story is the reign of Ahasuerus, king of Persia. It is presented as an account of the experiences of Queen Esther at the Persian court. The only character in the story whom we may regard as historical is the king who may be identified with Xerxes I. There is no evidence outside of the Book of Esther that a Jewish woman ever presided as queen at a Persian court, nor are there any records to indicate that the other events related in the story correspond to anything that actually happened. But the author was not writing history and he, therefore, felt free to take liberties in dealing with factual materials whenever he found it necessary to do so for the purpose of his story.

The book opens with an account of a royal feast which lasted for seven days. It was an occasion of great splendor and it was attended by much feasting and drinking on the part of all the royal personages belonging to the realm. On the seventh day of the feast King Ahasuerus sent a messenger to Queen Vashti asking her to appear before the princes and the people in order that they might behold her royal beauty. When she refused to appear in answer to his summons, the king was very much disturbed and he took counsel among his advisers as to what should be done about it. They all agreed it was a serious matter for if it should become known throughout the land the wives would all cease to obey their husbands. Some drastic action must be taken. It was therefore decreed that Vashti could no longer be queen and the king began making arrangements for someone to be selected to take her place.

Now there was a certain Jew named Mordecai who belonged to one of the families that had been taken captive into Babylon. He had a beautiful niece named Esther who was living in his home and whom he adopted as his own daughter after the death of her parents. When Mordecai learned that the king's servant had been sent out to select a group of beautiful maidens from among whom he might choose his next queen, he brought Esther to the house where the maidens were kept until such time as they would be presented to the king. When the time came for the maidens to make their appearance before the king, it was Esther who found favor in his sight and she, therefore, became his queen. During this time it was not known that she was a Jewess for both she and Mordecai had taken care to keep this fact a secret.

After Esther had been made queen, her uncle Mordecai who was now employed as one of the king's gatekeepers learned of a plot which had been made against the king's life. He reported it to Esther who in turn made it known to the king. The plotters were put to death and an entry was made in the royal records which showed how the king's life was spared. In the meantime a man named Haman had been promoted to a position in the kingdom which was second only to the king himself. Orders had been given for all the king's servants to bow whenever Haman would pass. All of them obeyed this order with the exception of Mordecai whose Jewish scruples forbade him to bow before anyone except the god whom he worshiped. Because of this refusal on the part of Mordecai to bow before him, Haman was very angry and succeeded in persuading Ahasuerus to sign a decree that on a certain day all Jews in the land were to be destroyed.

Realizing the terrible plight in which the Jews have been placed by this decree, Mordecai pleads with Queen Esther to go before the king and intercede in their behalf. Esther is aware of the dangerous position in which she has been placed, for there is a law pronouncing the sentence of death on anyone who appears before the king unless he has sent for them. There is only one exception and that is that the person who thus appears shall so please the king that he holds out his royal scepter. Esther resolves to go before the king even though it may cost her life. When she appears, the king is pleased and holds out his sceptre to her. At Esther's request both the king and Haman attend a banquet which she has prepared on each of two successive days. Haman is delighted with the honor that has come to him but he is still greatly disturbed by the fact that the Jew, Mordecai, will not make obeisance to him. At his wife's suggestion he decides to have this miserable Jew hanged. For this purpose he builds a gallows that is fifty cubits high.

On the night after the first banquet the king was unable to sleep and gave orders to his servants to read to him from the official records. They read the account of Mordecai's discovery of the plot which had been made against the king and the efforts which he put forth to save the king's life. When he found out that nothing had been done to reward Mordecai, the king began to wonder about an appropriate way of honoring this individual who had rendered so great a service to him. At this point Haman, who has been standing outside, enters the court and the king asks him to suggest something "for the man whom the king delights to honor."[23] Haman, thinking that the king has him in mind, proposes that the individual be clothed in royal apparel and placed at the head of a great and imposing procession. Then the king tells Haman to see that all these honors are bestowed on Mordecai.

At the second banquet which Esther gives to the king and Haman, the queen is asked to present any petition that she desires. The king assures her that any request she makes will be granted even to the half of his kingdom. This gives to Esther just the opportunity for which she has been waiting. She asks the king to spare her people, the Jews, so they will not be destroyed on the day that has been set for their destruction. The king seems to be wholly unaware of the measures that have been taken against Esther's people and he asks her who is responsible for an action of that kind. She replies that it is this wicked man, Haman. The king is exceedingly angry with Haman. He gives an order for his execution which is carried out by Haman's being hanged on the same gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai.

With Haman out of the way, the king appoints Mordecai to serve in his place. Because it is impossible for him to alter the royal edict which has been made against the Jews, the king authorizes Mordecai to issue another decree which will make the former one harmless to the Jewish people. This second edict is given out just seventy days after the proclamation by Haman of the date on which the Jews were to be massacred. Mordecai's decree permits the Jews not only to defend themselves on that date but to put to death all those who attack them at that time. The result was a great triumph for the Jews. When the fateful day arrived they slaughtered their enemies in a wholesale manner and thereby achieved peace and security for themselves. The story closes with an account of the Feast of Purim that was held in celebration of the victory which the Jews had achieved over their enemies.

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[23] Esther 6:6-7.

The Purpose of the Book

This brief summary is sufficient to bring to light several important characteristics of the story. The intense nationalism on the part of Jewish leaders, their hatred toward foreigners who had oppressed them, their rejoicing over the destruction of their enemies, the actions of a Persian king which in the end serve the Jewish cause, and the conviction that the Jews will ultimately achieve their national destiny, all find illustration in this story. It reminds one of the many "hymns of hate" that have been written by people of one nation against those of another in times of war. The secularism of the book makes one wonder how it came to be included in the canon of the Scriptures. The answer to this question is probably to be found in the fact that it purports to give an explanation for the origin of an important religious festival. It is quite evident, however, that for the author of the Book of Esther this feast possessed a patriotic rather than a religious significance. He wanted it to become an annual occasion for the revival of the nationalistic spirit among his people.

It is quite impossible for one to appreciate the significance of this book apart from the historical situation in which the Jews had lived during the closing centuries before the beginning of the Christian era. The severe persecution which they had suffered at the hand of Antiochus, the Syrian ruler, the cruelties and hardships of the Maccabean wars, and the brief period of independence which came to them at the close of this conflict, are in the background of this narrative. We may be glad that it was included in the list of Old Testament writings in spite of its secular and nationalistic character, for it reveals an important aspect of Jewish life, one that has so much in common with the attitudes and spirit that are exemplified in the affairs of nations at the present time.

Chapter 17

THE BOOK OF DANIEL AND APOCALYPTIC LITERATURE

From the earliest period of Jewish national history, the literature which was produced by prophets, priests, and other writers reflects a profound optimism for the future. In spite of all the hardships, disappointments, and political disaster which overtook the nation from time to time, there was always a hope that someday better times would come. With the possible exception of Amos and a few others who may have shared his view, the catastrophes which fell upon the Israelite people were only a prelude to a time when their troubles would be over and their national hopes realized. This period of their triumph was always associated with the idea of the fulfilment of the divine purpose and no loyal worshiper of Yahweh could ever doubt that someday this would come to pass.

The course of Hebrew history throughout the centuries did not meet these expectations. One disaster was followed by another and whenever they thought the time had arrived for their fortunes to change some new catastrophe would overtake them. Finally, as a result of these many unfortunate experiences, a new type of thinking and a new form of literature began to emerge. Men began to lose confidence in their ability to do anything which might hasten the coming of a new and better order of things. They came to the conclusion that their own future as well as that of the other nations was in the hands of Yahweh and there was little or nothing that they could do about it. In his own time Yahweh would intervene and bring about the transformation that would realize the Jewish hopes for their own future, and an appropriate punishment for the nations which had stood in the way of Israel's progress. In the meantime there was nothing for the Hebrews to do except to keep themselves in readiness for this event and to wait patiently for Yahweh's intervention in their behalf.

The new literature in which this way of thinking found expression is known as apocalyptic. The term is derived from a word which connotes a special revelation of truths which have been hidden from people in general but are made known to some particular individual possessing the necessary qualifications to receive them. The revelation of these truths is then communicated by this person to the ones for whom it has been intended. As a general rule, the revelation is made to the individual in the form of a dream or vision concerning things that are to come. Sometimes the interpretation appears obvious to the one who has received the vision but at other times an interpreter is necessary to make its meaning clear.

The beginnings of apocalypticism among the Hebrews can be traced back as far as the time of Amos when this prophet proclaimed to the people of northern Israel his visions concerning the plumb-line and the basket of summer fruit.[1] The meaning of the vision in each case was a prediction of the coming captivity of the nation. Isaiah's opening vision which came to him "in the year that King Uzziah died" [2] contains some of the same elements which characterize the apocalyptic writings of a later period. The Book of Ezekiel goes much farther in this direction than any of the writings which had appeared before the Babylonian exile. In the vision which is recorded in the first three chapters of the book, and again in those sections which have to do with the future of the nation of Israel and the final destruction of all her enemies, the apocalyptic form of expression is clearly illustrated. After the return from the Exile, apocalypticism appears again in certain portions of Zechariah and in some of the additions that were made to other collections of writings. It is not, however, until we come to the Book of Daniel that we find the apocalypticism of the Old Testament in its most developed form. From this time forward until we reach the early centuries of the Christian era this literature came to be more and more prevalent. Its influence is particularly strong in the closing centuries before the Christian era and it forms the background for much of the material which is included in the literature of the New Testament.

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[1] Amos 7:7-9; 8:2-3.

[2] Isa. 6:1.

Characteristics of Apocalyptic Writing

For a long time the apocalyptic writings of the Old Testament were interpreted by both Jews and Christians as illustrations of the way in which events pertaining to the distant future could be foretold by means of a divine revelation. The apocalyptic seer was usually regarded as someone who had lived in very ancient times. He was one to whom a special vision or revelation had been given outlining the events that were to take place for centuries to come. Sometimes the predictions would cover the entire span of time elapsing from the receiving of the vision to the end of the world or the setting up of a messianic kingdom. The fact that the most if not all of the predictions that had been made were already fulfilled, would indicate that it was possible for the future to be revealed in advance and that the remainder of the events would surely come to pass. Because of this ability to foretell the future, the one who had received the vision was known as a prophet. Furthermore, this particular function of making predictions concerning future events came to be regarded as the chief or major characteristic Old Testament prophecy.[3]

We know now that these conclusions were not well founded. They have been based, to a large extent, upon a misunderstanding of the writings themselves. This has been due, at least in part, to a failure to distinguish between the essential characteristics of apocalyptic writing and prophecy. So long as the bulk of apocalyptic writings contained in the Apocrypha and the Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament were comparatively unknown, it seemed reasonable enough that the very few writings of this order which belong to the canonical books should be interpreted in accordance with the same principles that were used in connection with the prophetic writings. But this prac-

[3] This conception of prophecy is set forth in the writings of the early Christian apologists. See Justin Martyr's first *Apologia,* No. CXXXI, I, *The Ante-Nicean Fathers* (New York: Chas. Scribner's Sons, 1899–1900).

tice is no longer followed by competent Old Testament scholars. The chief factor in bringing about a change from this point of view has been a thorough study of apocalyptic literature as a whole, including those books which do not belong to the recognized canon of the Scriptures. In the light of the investigations that have been made, it has become evident that these writings possess a striking similarity both in the form in which they are presented and the essential content of their different messages.[4] Furthermore, a knowledge of these characteristics that the apocalyptic writings have in common, goes a long way toward providing a key for understanding the meaning and purpose for which each of them was written.

Outside the Old Testament books which have been mentioned, the more important Jewish apocalyptic writings include the Book of Enoch, II Esdras, IV Esdras, Secrets of Enoch, the Apocalypse of Baruch, the Apocalypse of Abraham, the Assumption of Moses, and others. Of the Christian apocalypses which are similar in form and meaning to the Jewish ones, the most important one is the Book of Revelation in the New Testament. While there are many individual differences which serve to distinguish these writings from one another, it is in their common characteristics that we find our best clue to their original meaning and purpose. We will mention only a few of them.

In the first place we find that the apocalypses were always produced during a period of national crisis. Each one was written at a time when the forces of evil were apparently in the ascendency and when it looked as though the chosen people of God were about to be annihilated or else completely suppressed by their enemies. Such periods of crises as were brought about by the Babylonian captivity, the Jewish-Maccabean wars, and the conquest of Palestine by other foreign powers provided the appropriate occasions for writings of this nature. The persecution of the Christians by the Roman empire during the latter part of the first century A.D. furnished the occasion for the writing of the Book of Revelation. Sometimes more than one apocalypse would be produced in response to a single period of crisis.

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[4] For a brief account of the major characteristics of apocalyptic writings see Shirley J. Case, *The Revelation of John* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1919), pp. 125-60.

The essential message which is contained in each of these writings is that the time of deliverance for God's people is close at hand. Although the situation with which the people are faced is a difficult and trying one, it is no time for them to become discouraged or to abandon the great traditions of their religious faith. Now, more than ever before, it behooves them to hold fast and not to become contaminated with any of the evils that surround them. While it is impossible for them to overcome their enemies by taking up arms against them, if they will only be patient, God will surely come to their rescue. He will not only deliver them in a miraculous manner but he will bring destruction upon their enemies.

The literary device which is used for the presentation of these messages consists of a dream or vision which was given to some worthy individual who lived a long time ago. In the vision he was permitted to see the whole course of events that would take place between the time when he received the vision and the establishment of the messianic kingdom. All of these events will have transpired exactly as they were predicted with the exception of the last ones which are now about to take place. This is the general pattern which may be seen in most of the apocalypses which have been preserved. For example, in the Book of Enoch, one of the apocalyptic writings that has been quoted in the New Testament,[5] we are told that Enoch, who was the seventh from Adam, received a series of visions after his eyes had been opened by God. The angels who had shown him a vision of the Holy One in heaven explained what he had seen in order that his wisdom might be recorded not for his own generation but for an age which was then in the distant future. In one of the visions given to him, the whole course of history from Adam to the founding of the messianic kingdom was revealed in a series of ten world-weeks. The first seven of these periods of time would have been completed when the vision was made public, and the last three would follow speedily. Similar visions are recorded from the experiences of Moses, Abraham,

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[5] Jude 1:14.

Baruch, and Ezra in the respective apocalypses associated with each of these names. In fact the pattern which is followed in these writings is so definite that scholars usually date the writing of the apocalypse at the time when the fulfilment of predictions ceases to be exactly as it had been foretold and the remaining events are indefinite so far as the time of their occurrence is concerned.

Another assumption of the apocalyptic writers is the existence of two worlds which are in deadly conflict with one another. One of these worlds is represented by the forces that make for goodness and the other one is identified with the evil power which is trying to gain supremacy over all the peoples of the earth. In some instances the evil forces are led by Satan the one being who is most responsible for all the wrongdoing which has come into the world.[6] God is the leader of the good forces and in the end he will be triumphant over the adversary. Although the conflict between the forces of good and evil has been going on for a long time, it will wax worse and worse until the great climax appears when God will intervene and bring deliverance to his people. This will be brought about by a sudden and catastrophic event which will bring to a close the present evil era and usher in the kingdom of righteousness.

The appearance on earth of the long-promised Messiah is another event which is described in many but not all of the apocalypses. His coming is associated with the setting up of the new kingdom and in some of the writings the Messiah takes an active part in the work of pronouncing judgment upon all those who have lived upon the earth. The final scene in the course of events has to do with the dispensing of rewards and punishments.[7] In the end the wicked are destroyed, the power of Satan is broken for all time to come, and the righteous are given possession of the earth which has been purified from the evil which has existed upon it.

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[6] The figure of Satan is apparently a late development in the writings of the Old Testament. In many of the apocalyptic writings he appears as the archenemy of God, the one who is primarily responsible for the sins of human beings. In the older prophetic writings individuals rather than Satan are held responsible for their own sins.

[7] Many of the apocalypses describe a judgment scene. The judge is God, or the Messiah, and in some instances the saints participate in the work of judging. The standard of the judgment is always the law of God as set forth in the writings of the Old Testament.

The message of the Apocalyptists is thus seen to be one of hope and encouragement for those who are being persecuted by an evil power strong enough to hold them in its grasp. No thought is presented of trying to convert the people who belong to this evil power. They are a wicked group and the chief concern of the righteous should be to keep themselves free from any of the evils which are present among their enemies. Faithfulness to the ideals and traditions of their religion will be rewarded by everlasting life in the new kingdom which is soon to be established.

The Historical Background of Daniel

The Book of Daniel is a collection of stories about a young Jew named Daniel who is said to have been among the captives in Babylon during the reign of King Nebuchadnezzar.[8] He remained in Babylon until after the death of Belshazzar who was slain on the night when foreign armies invaded the city. There are twelve chapters in the book. The first six of these, with the exception of Chapter 2, contain stories about Daniel and three of his Jewish companions. Their faithfulness to the principles of the Jewish religion, in spite of the difficult circumstances under which they were placed, is one of the chief features of these stories. They refused to eat the king's meat and to drink the king's wine after they had been ordered to do so. The three companions would not bow down to a golden image of the king even though they were thrown into a fiery furnace for disobeying the orders which had been given to them. Daniel continues to pray to the god of his fathers with his windows open toward Jerusalem, although the penalty for doing this was none other than being cast alive into a den of lions. In the end these faithful Hebrews were rewarded for their loyalty to the God of Israel. They were delivered from the fiery furnace, and the den of lions and made the recipients of high honors. The lesson which these stories was intended to convey is an

[8] Dan. 1:1-7.

obvious one. God comes to the rescue of those who are faithful to him. He has done so in times past and he will do it again whenever the occasion arises.

Chapters 2 and 7 to 12 have to do with dreams and visions and the interpretation of these experiences which Yahweh gave through Daniel who was aided in some instances by the angel Gabriel. These dreams were given for the purpose of foretelling events that were yet to take place. They covered the whole range of events having to do with the rise and fall of nations from the time of the Babylonian empire to the setting up of the messianic kingdom. One of the chief features in these predictions is the coming of a severe period of persecution upon the "saints of the Most High."[9] The afflictions which they will have to bear will become more and more intense as they approach the time when God will miraculously intervene in their behalf. At that time the righteous will be delivered and the wicked will be destroyed. God will then establish his kingdom upon the earth and the saints will be given full possession of it forever.

Was the Daniel of these stories a real historical character? Both Jewish and Christian tradition have affirmed the belief that he was. They have held, therefore, that the Book of Daniel must have been written during the sixth century B.C.[10] The events recorded in the book were regarded as actual occurrences. For example, Daniel did interpret a dream of King Nebuchadnezzar which symbolized the coming of four great universal empires and the eventual establishment of a new kingdom that would endure forever. Again, he was present on the night of Belshazzar's feast and interpreted the handwriting on the wall which meant the overthrow of the Babylonian empire and the setting up of the kingdom of the Medes and the Persians. He saw in his visions by night the four beasts which represented the nations that would arise; their actions culminating in the cruel period of persecution that would be waged by the fourth or nondescript beast. He was also informed by the angel concerning the meaning of prophetic periods such as the seventy weeks, the 1260 days, and the 2300 days. The fact that these predictions, made during the closing days of the Babylonian empire and verified by the subsequent events of history, has been regarded as evidence of the power of God to foretell through his servants the exact time when specific events belonging to the distant future will come to pass.

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[9] Dan. 7:25.

[10] For illustrations of this view concerning the book of Daniel see the following: R. D. Wilson, *Studies in the Book of Daniel* (New York and London: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1917); Charles H. H. Wright, *Daniel and Its Critics* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1906); and Uriah Smith, *Thoughts on Daniel and Revelation* (Mountain View: Pacific Press, 1944).

Although there are some scholars who still hold to this view of Daniel, the majority of Old Testament critics are now convinced that it is not a tenable position. Some of the difficulties which are involved in predictions of this type have been discussed in connection with the subject of Deutero-Isaiah's interpretation of history. Especially the time-predictions which indicate the precise moment when certain political movements will begin and the exact date when they will close are not reconcilable with the idea that human beings have the power of choice and are thus morally responsible for the things they do. But there are other difficulties as well which are involved when the Book of Daniel is interpreted as a record of historical events. Several of the activities which are mentioned do not coincide with the actual history of the period as it is revealed by other sources.[11] The chief reason, however, for abandoning the traditional view is that the entire content of the book constitutes an appropriate message for the conditions which prevailed during the persecution of the Jews by Antiochus Epiphanes. Further, we find that all the major characteristics of apocalyptic writing are illustrated in Daniel. In the light of these facts, the evidence is overwhelmingly to the effect that the book was addressed to the Jewish people at the time when Antiochus, the Syrian ruler, launched his offensive against Palestine. It was evidently intended to strengthen their faith in this period of crisis just as other Jewish apocalypses were produced at other times of crisis for the purpose of doing a similar thing.

[11] See R. H. Pfeiffer, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1941), pp. 754-60.

To understand the historical situation out of which the Book of Daniel was produced, it is necessary to review briefly some of the more important political events which took place outside Palestine during the centuries following immediately the return of the Hebrews from the Babylonian exile.[12] It was Cyrus, the Persian king, who first gave permission to the Jews to go back to their homeland. The Persian empire was brought to its end during the later part of the fourth century by the conquests of Philip of Macedonia and his son Alexander who is often referred to as Alexander the Great. Philip became master of Greece in the year 338 B.C. Two years later he was assassinated, his son succeeding him to the throne. Alexander was at the time only twenty years of age. His education had been under the direction of Aristotle, the most learned scholar of Greece and in many respects one of the greatest minds of all time. From Aristotle he had derived a strong passion for Greek culture and a desire to unify the various nations of the world. As soon as his power had become firmly established in the west, he turned his attention toward the east and carried his conquests as far as India. By this time he had succeeded in bringing under his control the territory which had formerly been held by the Babylonians and later by the Persians. He took over all of Asia Minor, and in Egypt he founded the city of Alexandria which he named for himself. On his return from India he stopped in Babylon, where he was occupied with plans for further extending his conquests when he died suddenly, shortly before reaching his thirty-third birthday.

Upon the death of Alexander his empire was divided among four of his generals, two of whom became the heads of important dynasties ruling over the territories of Egypt and Syria respectively. Palestine, no longer an independent state, was for a long period of time subject either to the Ptolemies who reigned in Egypt or the Seleucids who controlled the territory of Syria. Since the leaders in both of these two countries were Macedonians there was a strong sentiment in each of them for carrying on the Alexandrian tradition and spreading Hellenic culture throughout the world. In Alexandria this spirit found expression in the art and literature for which the place became famous. Outside of Egypt the influence of Greek ideas and customs could be seen in such cities as Antioch and Tarsus and in numerous other places.

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[12] For a brief historical survey of this period see S. Mathews, *A History of New Testament Times in Palestine* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1925), chaps. i-v.

Under Alexander the Great the Jewish community in Palestine was allowed a considerable amount of liberty. They were permitted to carry on the traditions of their religion without serious interference. After his death it was the Egyptian power that first gained control over the Palestinian territory. During this period the Jews experienced little serious difficulty for the policy of Egypt was one of tolerance and consideration for her subjects. But their fortunes changed after the Seleucids had succeeded in their attempt to wrest the control of Palestine from the Egyptians. Antiochus III did not place any special burden on the Jews and the same can be said of his successor Seleucus, although it has been said that the latter did dispatch an officer to rob the temple at Jerusalem of some of its funds. The real trouble, so far as the Jews were concerned, began with the accession to the throne of Antiochus IV who is usually referred to as Antiochus Epiphanes.

The spread of Hellenic culture in their midst was, as a general rule, strongly resisted by the Jews who regarded this movement as a serious threat to the continuance of their own religious traditions. Unfortunately for the main body of the Jewish people, there were always some of their own people who were willing to make any compromise with their foreign rulers that would gain favors for themselves. Shortly after Antiochus became the head of the government he was approached by one of these self-seeking Jews who asked to be named the high priest for his people. To gain this appointment he offered Antiochus a bribe and asked that he be allowed to build a gymnasium in the city of Jerusalem and select a body of Jewish youth to be trained in it. These requests were of course particularly pleasing to Antiochus who was anxious to extend as far as possible the cultural influences of Greece. He made the appointment as he had been requested to do. The result was that Greek customs and manners were now permitted to flourish in the chief city of the Jews, and it was done with the full sanction of the new high priest, now the highest Jewish official in the land. The conservative and loyal Jews were very much disturbed by the turn of events but there was little or nothing that they could do about it. They did not have the power to override the actions of their high priest. Matters went from bad to worse. Before long another self-seeking Jew who had no hereditary connection with the line of priests developed a plot for getting the office of high priest for himself. He simply offered Antiochus a larger bribe than he had received before. The plot was successful and he was named to the high priesthood, replacing the person whom the Syrian king had appointed to that office in the first place.

The dishonesty and sacrilege involved in this procedure was too much for the loyal Jews who were trying to preserve the sacred heritage of their religion. They broke out in open rebellion against this last appointment. By this time most of the Palestinian Jews had taken sides in the controversy. Either they were ready to support the high priest whom Antiochus had appointed and thus lend their support to the spread of Hellenistic culture in their own midst, or they were determined to make no compromise with this foreign ruler or any of his policies. Instead, they would remain steadfast and loyal to the teachings of their religion. As soon as the revolt broke out, the high priest appealed directly to Antiochus to put it down. The Syrian king evidently regarded this revolt on the part of the Jews as an open challenge to his authority. He decided to take severe measures against the ones who were responsible for causing this trouble. Accordingly, he dispatched an army to Jerusalem which inflicted a heavy penalty on the people. The Jews, however, continued to resist and two years later Antiochus sent another army to Palestine. This time he was determined to bring the stubborn Jews into complete submission to his will. Recognizing the influence of their religion in causing them to oppose the appointment of the high priest and the carrying out of his policies, he decided to put an end to Judaism and thereby eliminate the major cause of this trouble.

With this objective in mind he sent messengers to Jerusalem with orders from the king forbidding the Jews to continue those practices which were peculiar to their religion. Our chief source of information concerning his decrees and their enforcement is derived from the two Books of Maccabees which are in the Old Testament Apocrypha. These two accounts, though written from the Jewish point of view, are not far removed in point of time from the events which are recorded and we may therefore rely on them for a fairly accurate account of the cruel and bloody persecution waged by Antiochus against the Jews, and which was carried on for the expressed purpose of eradicating their religion. According to these accounts,[13] the Jews were forbidden under penalty of death to offer sacrifices to their God in the temple at Jerusalem or for that matter at any other place. They were also forbidden under the same penalty to observe their weekly sabbaths or to celebrate any of their regular religious feasts. They were ordered to eat swine's flesh thus violating the Jewish laws which forbid the use of unclean meats. They were to disregard all distinctions between the holy and the profane and to desecrate the places and institutions associated with their former religious practices. It was even decreed that they should erect altars to heathen gods and to sacrifice swine's flesh upon them. No Jew was permitted to pray to the God of Israel or to participate in any of the rites and ceremonies designed to perpetuate the religion of their fathers. It was an all-out attempt on the part of the Syrian king to completely obliterate the Jewish religion from the face of the earth.

No sooner had these decrees been issued by Antiochus than steps were taken for their enforcement. An army was sent to Jerusalem with orders to execute anyone who offered resistance to the new regulations. The soldiers forced their way into the sacred precincts of the temple where previously no one, other than a circumcised Jew, had been allowed to enter. They tore down the altar of burnt offerings and in its place erected one dedicated to a heathen god.[14] Not satisfied with the defilement which had thus taken place they consummated their desecration of the Jewish holy place by sacrificing a pig upon the altar. As the Syrian soldiers went from village to village they erected altars to heathen gods. They forced the Jews to burn incense before graven images and to offer sacrifices to these heathen deities. They were compelled to eat swine's flesh and to renounce all allegiance to the laws of Moses. Parents who permitted their children to be circumcised or who aided the procedure in any way were speedily put to death. Never before had the Jewish people been persecuted in a manner like this. They had seen plenty of hardships before and they had faced captivity in a foreign land, but no systematic attempt had been made to force them to renounce their religious beliefs and practices.

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[13] I Macc. 1:41-51.
[14] I Macc. 1:54-64.

Religion cannot be annihilated that way. Antiochus had yet to learn that the persecution of a people because of their religion, instead of making them give it up, tends only to make their devotion and loyalty stronger than it was before. To be sure there were many Jews who temporarily and for the sake of expediency obeyed the orders which the king had given. But they did so only in order that they might remain alive and be ready to fight against him when the opportune time would come. Every act of conformity on their part only fanned the flames of hatred against the Syrian power and caused the people to resolve that someday they would throw off this cruel yoke of oppression and gain the freedom which had been promised to their fathers. Not all the Jews followed this course. There were others among them who made the high resolve to remain loyal to the god of their fathers no matter what the cost to themselves or to the members of their families. They would not desecrate the holy institutions of their religion or violate the commandments of their God even if it cost them their lives. And that is just what it did cost many of them. The cities of Palestine were filled with scenes of bloodshed and the number of martyrs grew with every attempt to enforce the decrees which Antiochus had given.

At last the Jews reached the point where they could accept this intolerable situation no longer. The immediate occasion for their revolt was an incident occurring at Modein, a small village not far from Jerusalem.[15] It was to this place that a prominent Jew named Mattathias had fled with his five sons when the persecution was at its height in Jerusalem. A decree had been issued requiring the people of this village to assemble on a certain day for the purpose of offering sacrifices to a heathen god on an altar which had been erected for that purpose. On the day appointed the Syrian officer who was in charge called upon Mattathias, as the leading man of the village, to set the proper example before the people by being the first one to obey the decree. But Mattathias was one of those zealous Jews who would not turn his back on the law of his God. He boldly refused to obey the command and called upon his Jewish brethren to die rather than renounce their faith. At this instant another Jew who was standing by and who did not possess the courage of Mattathias but hoped to win some favor for himself, stepped forward to offer the sacrifice. It was more than Mattathias could stand. He drew his sword and killed the Jew on the very altar where he was about to offer the sacrifice. He then killed the astonished officer, and after destroying the altar that had been erected, he called upon all Jews who wanted to remain faithful to the principles of their religion to join him in a life and death struggle for freedom. With his five stalwart sons he then fled into the mountains. Before long the news concerning Mattathias had spread and from every quarter of the land loyal Jews flocked to his standard. The war with the Syrians had begun. Because the Jews were fighting in their own land and over territory with which they were familiar it was possible for their small renegade band of fighters to surprise the Syrians in narrow mountain passes and to gain one victory after another. The success of their cause inspired the belief that Yahweh was fighting on their side and hence their enemies would be defeated.

The hardships of the war were too much for Mattathias. Just before he died he called his sons about him and told them to carry on the struggle and never to lay down their arms until the Jewish people were free. After the death of the father, Judas, called the *Maccabean* or *hammerer,* became the leader of the Jewish army. He succeeded in capturing Jerusalem and just three years from the day when the Syrian soldiers had profaned the temple he was able to enter it again.[16] He rebuilt the altar of burnt offerings that had been desecrated by the foreign soldiers and once more the daily sacrifices were observed. The candles were lighted and the services of the temple resumed, not to be interrupted again until the building was destroyed two centuries later by the Roman general, Titus. Judas Maccabeus continued the war against the Syrians until the time of his death. Then his brother Jonathan took over the leadership, and he in turn was followed by his brother Simon. By this time the Jews had won their independence from the Syrians and the Maccabean line of rulers was continued until the time of the Roman conquest.

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[15] I Macc. 2:1-38.

It was shortly after the outbreak of the war between the Jews and the Syrians that the author of Daniel wrote the book which bears that name. He was a loyal Jew of the more conservative type who had long looked with disfavor on the whole program of introducing Hellenic culture into the land of Palestine. He believed that his people should make no compromise with the customs and practices of other nations. It was their duty to obey the law which Yahweh had given to them. Under no consideration should they transgress any of the divine commandments in order to conform to the decrees of Antiochus. Death would be preferable at any time to actions that would involve a denial of their faith. But the struggle was not an easy one and the Jewish people needed encouragement. The Book of Daniel was designed for the purpose of fulfilling that need.

Stories of Deliverance in the Past

Because of the circumstances which prevailed at the time of writing the author could not use his own name. At least it would be far more effective for him to present his message as coming from some hero who had lived at an earlier date. The age of prophecy had passed and there were many who no longer believed that God continued to speak directly with human beings.

[16] I Macc. 4:37-51.

It would help to win prestige for this writing if it could be made to appear that it originated during the era of the great prophets. Besides, it would enable the author to show conclusively that events had been foretold which only God would have the power to predict.

The stories related in the first-half of the book told of a time when the people of Israel had been tested for their loyalty under conditions that were strikingly similar to the ones which the Jews now faced under the persecutions of Antiochus. In the first of these stories Daniel and his three Hebrew companions had been selected for special training in order that they might carry out certain responsibilities in connection with the court of King Nebuchadnezzar in Babylon.[17] During this period of training they were to partake of the king's meat and wine that was also served to other young men of the realm with whom they were to compete. Being aware of the fact that this diet was not in harmony with the requirements of the Hebrew religion, these faithful sons of Israel refused to eat "the king's rich food . . . or the wine which he drank," [18] although they were threatened with severe punishment if they did not comply. Their loyalty worked out in the end to their own advantage for at the close of their period of training it was demonstrated that they were in better physical shape and possessed more wisdom than the Babylonian young men who had eaten the food which was prescribed.[19] God had rewarded them for their obedience to the dietary laws of their religion. What an appropriate lesson this was for the Jews who had now been ordered by Antiochus to eat swine's flesh!

In another story, the lesson had to do with the refusal on the part of some faithful Hebrews to worship idols or to bow down to graven images. This time it was Daniel's three companions, named by the Babylonians as Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, who were the heroes of the story. King Nebuchadnezzar had made a huge image of gold that was set up on the plains of Dura. He commanded that on a certain day the people of the

[17] Dan. 1.
[18] Dan. 1:8.
[19] Dan. 1:15, 20.

province should be assembled before the image to take part in the dedication of it. At a given signal, sounded by a number of musical instruments, the people must all bow down and worship the golden image that had been set up. The penalty for refusing to comply with this order was that the offender should be cast into a fiery furnace. Daniel's three companions were among the ones who had been assembled before the image when the signal to bow down and worship was given. But they did not obey the order. The officer in charge reported their conduct to the king who was exceedingly angry because of their refusal to obey his command. He ordered that they be brought before him immediately. He then told them they would be given one more opportunity and if they disobeyed him this time he would have no mercy upon them.

> "Now if you are ready when you hear the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, bagpipe, and every kind of music, to fall down and worship the image which I have made, well and good; but if you do not worship, you shall immediately be cast into a burning fiery furnace; and who is the god that will deliver you out of my hands?" (Dan. 3:15)

The answer which the three Hebrews gave to the king is a classic statement which illustrates the courage of men who are willing to face death in order to be true to the principles of their religious faith.

> Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace; and he will deliver us out of your hand, O king. But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image which you have set up." (Dan. 3:16-18)

This calm declaration on the part of the Hebrews made the king more furious than ever. He gave orders at once for the furnace to be heated seven times hotter than it had been before and he commanded his strong men to bind these persons and cast them into this fiery furnace. The order was carried out, but just at the moment when it was executed the God of the

Hebrews intervened in behalf of his faithful servants. The heat from the furnace was so intense that it killed the king's strong men when they opened the door and threw their prisoners inside but it did not harm the Hebrews at all. The only thing about them that burned was the cord with which they had been bound. As the astonished king looked into the open furnace he could scarcely believe his eyes.

> "Then King Nebuchadnezzar was astonished and rose up in haste. He said to his counselors, "Did we not cast three men bound into the fire?" They answered the king, "True, O king." He answered, "But I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they are not hurt; and the appearance of the fourth is like a son of the gods." (Dan. 3:24-25)

After this experience the king called to the men who had been thrown into the fire and praised the God whom they had worshiped. He even made a decree that anyone who should speak against the God of these Hebrews should be cut in pieces and he gave to these men a promotion in the affairs of the kingdom. It was a marvelous story and one that was bound to inspire courage in the hearts of those who were now being threatened with death if they did not worship the images which had been set up by Antiochus.

In a third story, the faithful Daniel was the hero because he continued to pray to the God of Israel when this was contrary to a law which had just been enacted by the government.[20] Daniel had been given a prominent place in the government of Darius the Mede. Other employees became jealous and formed a plot to get rid of him. Knowing that it was his custom to pray to the God of Israel three times each day, they persuaded the king to sign a decree which made it a capital offense for anyone to pray to any god except the king for a period of thirty days. The penalty for violating this decree was that the offender should be thrown into a den of lions. When the king learned of their plot against Daniel, he tried to withdraw the decree but it was too late for the law of the Medes and Persians could not be changed. In the meantime, Daniel continued to pray to the God of his fathers with his window open towards Jerusalem. He was caught in the act by his enemies and was therefore cast into the den of lions. But Daniel was not harmed in the least. He walked about in the midst of the lions and not one of them did a thing to hurt him. When Darius saw that he had been spared, he gave orders that he should be taken out of the den and the people who had plotted against him should be thrown into the place where he had been. They had scarcely reached the bottom of the den when the lions tore them into pieces. Again, the lesson of the story was obvious. If God had delivered his faithful servants in times past he would do it again.

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[20] Dan. 6.

Predictions Concerning the End

Stories about the miraculous way in which God had protected those who were faithful to him under trying circumstances would be a great help to those who were being tortured by the persecutions of Antiochus. It would help still more if they could only be given some assurance that the period of their affliction would soon be at an end. The author of the book of Daniel believed the time was close at hand when the Jews would be delivered from this terrible oppression. He wanted to share this conviction with his harassed brethren. The literary form for doing this was something with which they were already familiar. Earlier writers had told about predictions made by Jacob, Noah, and other ancient worthies.[21] In fact, the whole course of Hebrew history had, on more than one occasion, been made to appear as something that had been foreseen by some individual who lived a long time ago. Here then was a literary device which was well suited for the emergency, and our author was able to use it more effectively than it had ever been used before. His first instance was the case of King Nebuchadnezzar's dream.

The king had a dream which troubled him very much but he was unable to recall any of its contents.[22] The wise men of his realm were assembled and asked to tell him the dream and to give its interpretation. This they were unable to do. The king was about to have them destroyed when Daniel appeared and declared that the God of Israel would reveal to him both the king's dream and its interpretation. Daniel told the king that in his dream he had seen a great image. The head of the image was of gold, its breast and arms of silver, the belly and thighs of brass, its legs of iron and the feet part of iron and part of clay. As he looked on the image he saw a stone cut out of the mountain without hands. This stone smote the image on its feet and ground it to powder. The stone then became a mountain and filled the whole earth.

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[21] See Gen. 9:25-27; 49:8-26.
[22] Dan. 2.

Having related the dream, Daniel proceeded to give the interpretation of it. The image as a whole symbolized four great empires which would rule over the earth. The first one was Babylon and this was represented by the head of gold. Speaking before Nebuchadnezzar, Daniel said boldly, ". . . you are the head of gold." He then explained that after him there would arise another kingdom which would be that of the Medes and Persians. The third would be the kingdom of Greece. It would be followed by the kingdom of iron which in many respects would be more cruel and terrible than any of the ones which had preceded it.

> "And there shall be a fourth kingdom, strong as iron, because iron breaks to pieces and shatters all things; and like iron which crushes, it shall break and crush all these." (Dan. 2:40)

The fourth kingdom will, however, contain certain elements of weakness as well as of strength. This fact is symbolized by the feet which are composed of iron mixed with clay. The ten toes of the image represent the kings who will rule during that period which follows the career of the fourth beast. It is in the days of these kings, says Daniel, that the God of heaven will set up his kingdom that will stand forever.[23]

It was a great dream with a marvelous meaning that the author of the Book of Daniel had thus described. We can well imagine the effect of its interpretation upon the minds of the persecuted Jews during the Maccabean era. They would understand that as far back as the time of the Babylonian captivity,

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[23] Dan. 2:44.

God had foretold the experiences through which they were now passing. He had indicated the way in which one empire would be followed by another down to the very time in which they were living. Every part of the prediction had been fulfilled except the setting up of the messianic kingdom. What further evidence could they wish that the rest of the prediction would soon come to pass?

In another vision which had a similar meaning, Daniel saw four beasts arising out of the sea.[24] The first one was a lion with eagle's wings. The second one was a bear with three ribs in its mouth. The third one was a leopard with four wings and four heads. The fourth one was a great and terrible beast quite unlike any other living creature. It was a powerful beast with great iron teeth and it had ten horns on its head. As Daniel stood looking at this beast, he saw a little horn pushing its way up among the ten and tearing out three of them in order to make room for itself. This little horn had eyes like the eyes of a man and a mouth speaking terrible things. Finally, the beast was slain and its body burned in the fire. After he had seen the vision an angel appeared before Daniel and explained its meaning to him.

The four beasts, according to the angel, are four kingdoms which shall arise upon the earth. The lion symbolizes the kingdom of Babylon which was then at the height of its power. The bear with the three ribs in its mouth is the kingdom of the Medes and Persians which will come immediately after Babylon. The leopard is the symbol of Greece which will be the third empire to rule over the earth. The four heads which appeared on the leopard represent the four parts into which the empire will be divided following the death of its first king. The fourth beast, like the kingdom of iron in Nebuchadnezzar's dream, is the next great power to arise. The ten horns, like the ten toes of the great image, are the ten kings that will hold office. The little horn represents the cruel persecuting power that will arise speaking words of blasphemy and wearing out the saints of the Most High. The description of this power corresponds so closely to the actual record of Antiochus that there can be little doubt he was the figure toward whom the author was pointing in this part of his book. Concerning the little horn, it is said

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[24] Dan. 7.

> "He shall speak words against the Most High,
> and shall wear out the saints of the Most High,
> and shall think to change the times and the law;
> and they shall be given into his hand
> for a time, two times, and half a time."
> (Dan. *7*:25)

While at the very height of his power, the strength of this little horn will be broken, for the day of judgment is near at hand.

> "But the court shall sit in judgment,
> and his dominion shall be taken away,
> to be consumed and destroyed to the end.
> And the kingdom and the dominion
> and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven
> shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High;
> their kingdom shall be an everlasting kingdom,
> and all dominions shall serve and obey them."
> (Dan. *7*:26-*27*)

The purpose of the vision and its interpretation is to assure the loyal Jews who are being tormented under the persecutions of Antiochus that the crisis in which they are now living will soon be over. The complete overthrow of this evil power was predicted centuries ago and since all of the earlier predictions have come to pass there can be no doubt that the remaining ones will also be fulfilled.

It was not enough for the author of Daniel to tell his contemporaries that someday they would be delivered from their oppression. They wanted to know how long this reign of terror would continue and just when the day of their deliverance would arrive. They also wanted to know why it was necessary for them to endure this painful experience and whether there was any reward in store for the faithful ones who had already given up their lives rather than deny their faith. An attempt to provide an answer to some of these questions is made in the visions and interpretations which are recorded in the last few chapters of the book.

In one of these visions Daniel beholds a ram, and after the ram a he-goat.[25] The goat had a notable horn between its eyes. While this horn was still strong, it was broken and four other horns came up in its place. Then out of one of these four there appeared another little horn which behaved in the same manner as the little horn in the vision of the four beasts. The angel which appeared to interpret this vision to Daniel explained that the ram symbolized the kingdom of the Medes and Persians and the goat represented the kingdom of Greece. The notable horn which appeared between its eyes was the first king of Greece.[26] The four horns were the four kings who would rule after his death. The little horn which came out of one of the four was the king who would persecute the saints with unrelenting cruelty. That the author had Antiochus in mind is indicated by the fact that it was this little horn power which caused the continual burnt-offering in the temple to cease. As Daniel beholds this evil power which has been putting to death the saints of the Most High and which has made impossible the offering of daily sacrifices in the temple, he wonders how long it will continue. "For how long is the vision concerning the continual burnt offering, the transgression that makes desolate, and the giving over of the sanctuary and host to be trampled under foot." [27] To this inquiry he hears one of the angels reply, "For two thousand and three hundred evenings and mornings; then the sanctuary shall be restored." [28] Here indeed was a message of hope for the exhausted and terror-stricken Jews. The power of Antiochus was soon to be broken. The period of desolation for the temple in Jerusalem would soon be over. It would last but three and one-half years and part of that time had already expired.

Before we reach the end of Daniel we find the author has introduced several specific periods of time. Besides the 2300 days, we read about the seventy weeks, sixty-two weeks, 1260 days, 1335 days, 1290 days, and other definite time spans. We

[25] Dan. 8.
[26] Dan. 8:21.
[27] Dan. 8:13.
[28] Dan. 8:14.

cannot discuss each of these periods but it seems quite clear that from the author's point of view God has a definite time table for the occurrence of particular events and everything happens in accordance with this pre-established plan. Beginning with the period of the captivity in Babylon, he tries to point out a definite plan and purpose for all that has taken place.

> "Seventy weeks of years are decreed concerning your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to put an end to sin, and to atone for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal both vision and prophet, and to anoint a most holy place. Know therefore and understand that from the going forth of the word to restore and build Jerusalem to the coming of an anointed one, a prince, there shall be seven weeks. Then for sixty-two weeks it shall be built again with squares and moat, but in a troubled time." (Dan. 9:24-25)

The end of the present order of things is near at hand but there are yet several events which must take place. The worst period of trouble will come just before the end.

> "At that time shall arise Michael, the great prince who has charge of your people. And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never has been since there was a nation till that time; but at that time your people shall be delivered, every one whose name shall be found written in the book." (Dan. 12:1)

The reward for faithfulness is not alone for those who have survived the time of trouble. Those who have suffered a martyr's death will also share in the reward for there will be a resurrection from the dead.

> "And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt." (Dan. 12:2)

The Book of Daniel is a piece of literature that was written for a period of crisis. Its primary application is to be found in the conditions which prevailed during the persecution of the Jews under Antiochus. It furnished what was needed most to keep alive the faith and courage of those who were suffering untold hardships because of their religion. But it would be a great mistake to suppose the value and influence of the book has been confined to that particular group or period of time. The stories recorded in its pages have furnished inspiration for people of every succeeding generation. In spite of the difficulties that are involved in the time-predictions that are made the author presents a philosophy of history that is a challenge to all of the materialistic and rationalistic schemes that have been invented. He has declared that the course of history is not in the hands of those who ignore the God of the whole earth. There is, he believes, a higher power to which the nations of the world are subject and who is there who can deny successfully that this is true?

Chapter 18

THE BOOK OF PSALMS

The Book of Psalms is the best known and the most loved of all the books that are included in the Old Testament.[1] Evidence for this statement can be seen in a number of different facts. One of these is the frequent publication of the Book of Psalms along with the writings of the New Testament. Another one is the use of quotations from this book in early Christian literature. More references to the Psalms can be found in the New Testament than is true of any other book in the Hebrew scriptures. The use of the Psalms as a devotional literature has been characteristic of many religious faiths although its greatest influence is to be found among Jews and Christians. Among both of these groups of people it has long been customary to read from the Psalms as a regular part of their worship services.

The Psalms are distinguished by many important characteristics. They are remarkable for their poetic beauty. In no other portion of the Old Testament does the spirit of the Hebrew people rise to greater heights. It has been said that poetry is the language of the heart. This is especially true of the poetry in the Book of Psalms, for it is here that we find an expression of those feelings that were at the very center of the religious life of the Hebrew people. If the prophets and sages of the Old Testament were able to tell us better than anyone else what the people of Israel thought, it is to the poets and the song writers that we must turn in order to learn what it was that they felt most deeply. The sentiments and longings of the human heart that one finds in the Psalms have for centuries been a source of inspiration and spiritual strength for all those who have become familiar with them.

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[1] See John Paterson, *The Praises of Israel* (New York: Chas. Scribner's Sons, 1950), chap. i.

The Book of Psalms is, from one point of view, a collection of poems, songs, and prayers. But it is more than a single collection. It is a group which has been gathered from many sources and which reflects a wide variety of experiences, both individual and national. Any complete account of the background for the Psalms would have to include the whole story of the life of the Hebrew nation as well as a description of the different types of religious experience belonging to the individuals whose lives are reflected in the poems that have been written. The book in its present form is the work of editors and redactors as well as that of the original authors whose writings came into the hands of the editors. The earlier poems, songs, and prayers have in many instances been supplemented by later materials and the final arrangement which we now have was not completed until a relatively late date.[2]

It is impossible for us to say just when the majority of the psalms first appeared. We cannot be sure about the order in which they were produced nor do we know at what time the oldest of them was written. The evidence would seem to indicate, however, that some of them go back as far as the time of King David and it is possible that a few of them are even older than that.[3] On the other hand, we can be reasonably sure that some of the psalms are as late as the period of the Maccabean wars for they reflect ideas and events which belong to this late period of Hebrew history. If we are correct in this assumption, the Book of Psalms may be regarded as a kind of epitome of the whole range of Hebrew history from the days of the united kingdom to the third or second centuries B.C.

A wide variety of experiences is reflected in the different psalms. Some of them express the attitude of the nation taken as a whole. Others are indicative of the feelings, hopes, and aspirations of particular individuals. Some of the Psalms were songs used by the people as they made their annual pilgrimages to the temple at Jerusalem in accordance with the law of the central sanctuary.[4] Other psalms are prayers which were offered on behalf of the Hebrew people. Some of them express the popular reaction that was felt concerning the calamities that had befallen the nation. Psalms of thanksgiving and praise for the way in which Yahweh had delivered the people from distress and oppression are also included. Nearly every period of crisis through which the nation had passed is reflected in one or more of the psalms. The same is true of the various types of experience which characterized the lives of individuals. Some of them express the attitude of repentance and contrition of heart. At other times it is despair, sorrow, joy, faith, and hope which one finds expressed. Then too, the great ideas which had been taught by the sages, priests, and prophets had their influence on the writers of the different psalms and this is a part of the explanation for the lofty sentiments which are found in many parts of the book.

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[2] See R. H. Pfeiffer, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1941), pp. 619-44.

[3] Samuel Terrien in *The Psalms and Their Meaning for Today* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1952) takes the position that the work of David can be seen in many of the psalms.

The vitality which has characterized the Book of Psalms over the centuries that have elapsed since it first appeared has been due to a number of important factors.[5] One of these is the deep sense of worship which permeates the entire collection. Worship is an expression of one's feelings and emotions as well as the particular ideas in which he believes. These feelings which were experienced by the authors of the different psalms could be transmitted to the worshipers as they would use the materials of the book in public worship services and in their private devotions. Because people in general are able to feel much more than they can think, the messages of the psalms could be appropriated by the masses, many of whom would never have been moved by the teachings of the sages or the instructions of the prophets.

The presence of Yahweh as a source of strength was thus made real to multitudes who would not have been able to experience him as fully through any other medium. The psalmists never argued about the existence of God, although they do assert that anyone is a fool who does not believe in him.[6] They always assumed the reality of Yahweh for he was revealed to them through their own inner experience and through the processes of history. It is true they were often puzzled and perplexed because of the fate which had befallen the nation but they did not, on this account, abandon their faith in Yahweh. He remained for them the supreme power in the universe and the one on whom they were dependent for everything which contributed to the value and meaning of existence. In spite of their sorrows and afflictions they could address to him their songs of thanksgiving and their hymns of praise.

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[4] For a description of the way in which the pilgrim psalms were used see Julius A. Bewer, *The Literature of the Old Testament* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1924), pp. 348-57.

[5] A list of factors contributing to the vitality of the psalms is given in the preface to Samuel Terrien, *op. cit.*

The frankness and sincerity characterizing the prayers of the book is another reason for the wide appeal which they have made. They reveal a sense of communication between the individual and Yahweh which permits the most complete expression of one's innermost thoughts and feelings. The psalmists are able to speak to their God from the very depths of their own souls. They do so because they have the utmost confidence and faith that he will understand them and do whatever is appropriate for their own good. Almost every mood and attitude which human beings experience can be found in this collection of prayers. They reveal not only a spirit of joy and thanksgiving but the sorrows and heartaches that have been felt by sensitive souls. The feelings of doubt, humiliation, repentance, and confession of sin are all illustrated. The same is true of those personal feelings which are usually not expressed in public. We find, for example, psalms in which there is revealed a spirit of deep resentment because of the unfair way in which the author has been forced to suffer. Sometimes the individual charges Yahweh with being unjust in his dealings with his people. Even the spirit of vindictiveness toward one's enemies is revealed in some of these prayers.[7] In these instances there is implied the conviction that Yahweh wants his people to speak frankly and truthfully to him. When they do this he is both able and willing to help them.

The emphasis given in the Psalms to man's social responsibilities is another reason why they have been cherished so highly through the centuries. It is true that the idea of an intimate fellowship between the individual and Yahweh is set forth very clearly in many of the psalms, but this does not mean the different authors were unaware of their duties toward the nation, and indeed to the rest of the people in other parts of the world. Private devotions were never regarded as a substitute for social action. Throughout the book there is a constant awareness of the divine purpose with reference to the nation as a whole and a deep concern on the part of individual psalmists for bringing it about. To this end they spoke freely about Yahweh's dealings with the Israelite people through the various periods of their national history. They saw not only justice but kindness and mercy in the way he had dealt with them. Too often the nation had failed to make any appropriate response to the goodness which Yahweh had shown them. The psalmists did not hesitate to administer reproof whenever and wherever they thought it was necessary. Their messages did, however, as a rule contain something more than an indictment of the people because of their sins. They were filled with hope for a better future that would not only include a realization of Yahweh's purpose for the Hebrew people but through them a triumph of the cause of justice and righteousness among all the nations of the world.

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[6] Pss. 14:1; 53:1.

[7] An example of vindictiveness may be seen in Ps. 137:8, 9, where the author asks Yahweh to take the babes born to the Edomites and dash their heads against a rock.

Still another reason for the remarkable vitality of the Book of Psalms can be found in the intrinsic beauty of its expression. No finer examples of Hebrew poetry can be found in the Old Testament. Poetry is especially useful as a medium for communicating those experiences in which the religious life of the people reaches some of its greatest heights. Human beings, as we all know, have an aesthetic element in their nature as well as an intellectual one. Consequently, religious feelings and sentiments when expressed in a manner appealing to both these elements can produce results impossible to obtain when the appeal is directed to either of them alone. The sages and prophets had proclaimed many important messages to their people but their appeals had been addressed primarily to the intellectual element present in the ones to whom they spoke. This meant that the effectiveness of the things they had to say was determined in no small degree by the ability and the willingness of the people to think clearly about the matters that were presented to them. Their strongest appeal would be made to the relatively small group of persons who had been trained to think for themselves. The majority of the people who were able to feel a great deal but who thought little would scarcely be reached by what they had to say.

It was different with the great poets who produced the Book of Psalms. They could appeal directly to the aesthetic side of human nature. Those who would not be attracted by the ideas set forth in their writings might still be won by the sheer beauty of the lines chosen for their expression. Again, we should bear in mind that it is possible for ideas to be communicated through the feelings when they can be transmitted in no other way. There is much truth in the statement made by Terrien when he says, "it is the poetry of the psalmists that compels our assent just as the power of inspiration compelled them to write."[8] Poetry and religion are indeed closely related in the Psalms. No other medium could have served so well to express the feelings of individuals who were conscious of the presence of God, and who contemplated at great length the meanings that were associated with many of the different and perplexing problems arising in human life.

Growth and Development of the Book of Psalms

It would be a great help toward a better understanding of the Book of Psalms if we could know something about the author of each one, and if we were familiar with the circumstances and conditions which prevailed when each of them was written. Unfortunately, we do not have any certain knowledge concerning either of these items. So far as any reliable information about authorship is concerned we must admit that the psalms are anonymous. The best we can do with reference to any of them is to formulate in our minds the most reasonable hypothesis we can obtain in the light of the actual contents present in it. This procedure will not give us the names of very many of the authors in question but it should enable us to approximate with a fair degree of accuracy the period when any particular writer lived, and it will give us some idea of the point of view which he held and the conditions which prompted him to say what he did.[9]

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[8] Samuel Terrien, *op. cit.*, p. xiv.

The idea that the Psalms was the work of King David, who has been referred to as "the sweet psalmist of Israel," can be found in both Jewish and Christian tradition. The titles or superscriptions which appear in many editions of the book attribute a large number of the psalms to him even though they do not credit him with having written all. Modern scholarship recognizes that these traditions and claims are not in harmony with the most reliable information which we possess. There can be no question of the view that many of the psalms made their first appearance a long time after the era of King David. For example, Psalm 137 must have been written either during or after the Babylonian exile for it is this experience to which the author refers when he says of the people of Israel they hung their harps on the willows and wept when they remembered Zion.[10] Psalm 46 reflects very clearly the teachings and the times of the prophet Isaiah. In fact there are many critics who do not hesitate to attribute the writing of this particular psalm to him. Again there are psalms which express in an eloquent manner the teaching of the eighth-century prophets about the offering of sacrifices and the performance of other ritualistic observances. Psalms 50 and 51 are of this nature. Certainly it would not be appropriate to regard them as coming from the era of David.

Many of the psalms are written in praise of the law.[11] They give particular emphasis to the matter of strict obedience to its requirements, and they promise great rewards to those who live in harmony with its precepts. The particular attitude which is displayed in these psalms would indicate that they were written during the post-Exilic period when this kind of instruction was the predominant theme. There are psalms which presuppose the Deuteronomic law of the central sanctuary. Other psalms reflect the teaching of Deutero-Isaiah concerning vicarious sacrifice. Israel's messianic hope which did not reach its full development until after the era of the prophets is the theme of certain psalms. Psalms 74 and 83 appear to have been written after the terrible experiences which came to the Jews during the period of the Maccabean wars.

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[9] See in this connection R. H. Pfeiffer, *op. cit.*, Part IV, chap. i, and also Julius A. Bewer, *op. cit.*, chap. xx.

[10] Ps. 137:1-4.

[11] See especially Pss. 19 and 119. The same theme is expressed in many of the other psalms.

The tradition which attributes to David the writing of so many of the psalms apparently had its origin in the post-Exilic period. The author of the two Books of Chronicles was one who idealized the life of David and presented the various activities of his reign in a far more favorable light than they appear from the records which are found in the Books of Samuel.[12] He did a similar thing with the reign of King Solomon to whom he attributed the writing of a vast number of proverbs.[13] It is quite possible that the tradition concerning Davidic authorship of the Psalms was in existence before the era of the Chronicler, but if so he made use of it in his efforts to glorify the reign of the second king of Israel. Because David had been known as a singer and one whose music was able to bring King Saul out of his fits of despondency, it seemed appropriate to credit him with the authorship of any psalm which appeared to reflect one or more of the experiences of his life. Once the tradition had been started it would be possible to add other psalms to the original collection especially if they appeared to have been written in the spirit of David or if they belonged to a particular collection of psalms used in memory of him.

Although we have no convincing proof that David wrote any of the psalms included in our present collection, it is quite possible that he had something to do with several of them. What seems most probable is that whatever contribution he may have made has been supplemented by the work of other writers until we can scarcely determine what was in the original composition. We can be sure that the work of editing and making additions to psalms was carried on until at least the third or second century B.C. It is fairly common among Old Testament scholars to attribute a part of Psalm 24 to David and it is not unreasonable

[12] See Julius A. Bewer, *op. cit.,* pp. 287-90.
[13] I Kings 4:32.

to suppose that Psalms 20 and 21 came from the period of the united monarchy.[14]

The use of songs and prayers in connection with their services of worship was customary among the Hebrews long before the time of the Babylonian captivity. The eighth-century prophets made frequent references to their use and they did not hesitate to criticize the people who relied upon their use as a substitute for moral conduct. When the temple was rebuilt after the return from the Exile, a collection of these songs and prayers was made. It was known as the David Psalter, a name which was not used to indicate authorship but rather to designate something that was used in honor of the great king whose memory was now held in high esteem. Later, another collection of psalms was made and this one was known as the Second David Psalter. Other collections were made from time to time and it is now possible to detect eight or nine separate collections within the Book of Psalms. One of these collections was known as the Korah Psalter, and another one is called the Asaph Psalter. There is also a group of psalms which have been called the Hallelujah Psalter, and still another one which is known as the Pilgrim Psalter.

Some of the psalms were used as the hymnbook of the second temple but it would be a mistake to regard the entire book in this manner. Only a part of what we have in our present book would have been appropriate for this purpose. Many of the psalms are prayers which express the feelings peculiar to individuals who had experienced certain trials and afflictions that did not come to people in general. Other psalms reflect the teachings which were not current until centuries after this temple had been built.

The final editing of the Book of Psalms places the materials into five groups, each one of which closes with an appropriate doxology. The divisions may be indicated as follows: Book I Psalms 2-41; Book II Psalms 42-72; Book III Psalms 73-89; Book IV Psalms 90-106; and Book V Psalms 107-150. Psalm 1 is used as a kind of introduction to the five books, and Psalm 150 is likewise a doxology for the entire collection. This arrangement of the book into five parts makes it correspond with other parts of the Old Testament especially the first five books which by this time were regarded as the five books of Moses or the Book of the Law. The Book of Proverbs is another one which contains a fivefold division and the same is true of the apocryphal book known as Ecclesiasticus or Wisdom of Jesus ben-Sirach. A similar scheme may be found in the Gospel of Matthew in the New Testament.[15]

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[14] See H. T. Fowler, *A History of the Literature of Ancient Israel* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1912), pp. 43-45. This position seems to be accepted quite generally among recent Old Testament scholars.

Types or Classes of Psalms

Because the psalms have been gathered from so many different sources and reflect such a wide variety of experience, it is difficult to find any satisfactory method of classifying them. Some writers have tried to do it on the basis of the form or type of poetry which is used. Others have used as a basis of division the way in which the psalms were used in connection with the religious life of the people. Thus we find that Bewer divides the psalms into three classes.[16] The first one includes the psalms that were used in connection with the public worship performed in the temple. The second one is made up of all those that were used for private worship in the temple. The third group includes the psalms used for private worship outside the temple. McFayden has classified the psalms according to the various topics which are treated in them.[17] He finds eleven different subjects treated in the book. They are as follows: Psalms of Adoration; Praises of Yahweh's Reign; Praise of the King; Psalms of Reflection; Psalms of Thanksgiving; Psalms in Celebration of Worship; Historical Psalms; Imprecatory Psalms; Penitential Psalms; Psalms of Petition; and Alphabetic Psalms. A similar method of classification is used by Barnes.[18] He lists ten different classes, viz., Prayers; Praises; Petitions for Deliverance; Confession of Faith; Confession of Sin; Intercessions; Deprecations; Instruction; Meditation on Moral Matters; and the Greatness of the Law. Hermann Gunkel's classification is followed by several American scholars who regard it as one of the best that has been given.[19] He recognizes the following types of psalms: Hymns; Songs of Yahweh's Enthronement; Laments of the People; Royal Psalms; Laments of the Individual; Minor Types; Prophetic Psalms; and Wisdom Poetry. It will be sufficient for our purpose to discuss briefly one or more illustrations for each of these types. This will be followed in the concluding section of our chapter by a short summary of the major ideas which are set forth in the book.

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[15] See E. F. Scott, *The Literature of the New Testament* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1932), pp. 69-70.

[16] Julius A. Bewer, *op. cit.*, pp. 347, 371, 377.

[17] J. A. McFayden, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1933), pp. 270-90.

[18] W. E. Barnes, *The Psalms,* Westminster Commentaries edited by W. Lock and D. C. Simpson (London: Methuen, 1931).

Hymns of praise constitute a large part of the Book of Psalms. It was customary among the Hebrews to sing praises to Yahweh as an expression of their gratitude for the marvelous things he had done for them. According to their tradition it was Miriam, the sister of Moses, who sang of the deliverance of the Israelites at the time when they crossed the Red Sea.[20] Other songs had been produced in commemoration of many of the important events in the history of the nation. In the course of time, songs which had been used in this manner were collected and made available for congregations as they assembled for their public services of worship. Besides these public songs there were others which expressed the piety and devotion of solitary souls. Among the hymns which are included in the Psalms the following ones may be regarded as typical: Psalms 8, 19, 29, 46, 84, 95, 103, 122, 139, and 146. The general character of these hymns may be indicated by a few selections made from them.

The author of Psalm 8 writes a beautiful song in praise of Yahweh whose greatness stands out in sharp contrast with the littleness, instability, and weakness of human beings. The angels represent a higher order of being than man but even they are inferior to Yahweh. His glory is proclaimed by the heavens and even babes and sucklings utter his praises. The song may have been used in public services of worship but it must have been written by an individual whose mind and heart had been deeply stirred by the idea of Yahweh's majesty and splendor.

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[19] See Fleming James, *Thirty Psalmists* (New York: Chas. Scribner's Sons, 1947), pp. 7-10.

[20] See Exod. 15:1-18.

O Lord, our Lord,
how majestic is thy name in all the earth!

Thou whose glory above the heavens is chanted
by the mouth of babes and infants,
thou hast founded a bulwark because of thy foes,
to still the enemy and the avenger.

When I look at thy heavens, the work of thy fingers,
the moon and the stars which thou hast established;
what is man that thou art mindful of him,
and the son of man that thou dost care for him?
(Ps. 8:1-4)

The glory of God as it is revealed in the heavens is the theme of the first part of Psalm 19.

The heavens are telling the glory of God;
and the firmament proclaims his handiwork.

. . .

Its rising is from the end of the heavens,
and its circuit to the end of them;
and there is nothing hid from its heat.
(Ps. 19:1, 6)

The second part of the psalm is written in praise of the law. The author declares that "the law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul." He says further, "the ordinances of the Lord are true, and righteous altogether." Because of the two themes which are treated in this psalm it is quite likely that we have here the work of two different authors whose hymns of praise were combined by a later editor. The combination would be an appropriate one since Yahweh whose glory is revealed in the heavens is also the one who has given the law.

Psalm 29 is also written in praise of Yahweh. It differs from the other ones we have mentioned in that the author finds Yahweh revealed not in nature viewed as a whole but rather in one of her particular manifestations. He sees Yahweh in the thunderstorm.

The voice of the LORD is upon the waters;
the God of glory thunders,
the LORD, upon many waters.
The voice of the LORD is powerful,
the voice of the LORD is full of majesty.
(Ps. 29:3-4)

When we come to Psalm 46 we find Yahweh praised for another reason. He is the one who comes to the rescue of his people in times of deep distress. The conditions which appear to be reflected in this psalm are the ones which prevailed in Jerusalem at the time of Sennacherib's invasion of the kingdom of Judah. Forty-six of the cities belonging to this kingdom had fallen and Jerusalem was itself threatened with destruction at the hands of the Assyrian army. King Hezekiah was frightened to the point where he was about ready to surrender. Only the prophet Isaiah had faith that the city would not be taken. He boldly proclaimed that it was Zion's city and for this reason it would stand and all the forces of the Assyrians would not be able to prevail against it. The spirit of the prophet's faith is clearly reflected in this psalm.

God is our refuge and strength,
a very present help in trouble.
Therefore we will not fear though the earth should change,
though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea;

. . .

God is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved;
God will help her right early.
The nations rage, the kingdoms totter;
he utters his voice, the earth melts.
(Ps. 46:1-2, 5-6)

It was during the reign of King Josiah that the famous lawbook was discovered in the temple. As soon as its precepts were enforced as the law of the land, it became necessary for every loyal Jewish family to make the journey at least once a year to the temple at Jerusalem. For those who had to travel a long way it was a great and impressive occasion. The services performed in the temple would be carefully observed and the opportunity of being in this holy place was something to be remembered and cherished. The journey and the experiences in the temple would, of course, be more meaningful to some worshipers than it would to others. One of these pilgrims who had grasped the significance of the temple and its many services was so deeply impressed by his experience that he wrote the hymn which is now known as Psalm 84:

How lovely is thy dwelling place,
  O Lord of hosts!

. . .

Blessed are the men whose strength is in thee,
  in whose heart are the highways to Zion.

. . .

For a day in thy courts is better
  than a thousand elsewhere.
I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God
  than dwell in the tents of wickedness.
(Ps. 84:1, 5, 10)

As the procession of pilgrims would march through the gate and into the presence of the temple the people would sing hymns of praise. Other hymns would also be used in connection with various parts of the worship service. There are many hymns that would have been appropriate for these services in the Book of Psalms. One of the choice examples is recorded in Psalm 95. It is more than a hymn of praise, for the author included an ethical note that he had gathered from the teachings of the prophets. He combined this instruction with the spirit of worship which is expressed in the language of the hymn.

O come, let us sing to the Lord;
  let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation!

. . .

O come, let us worship and bow down,
  let us kneel before the Lord, our Maker!
For he is our God,
  and we are the people of his pasture,
  and the sheep of his hand.

O that today you would hearken to his voice!
(Ps. 95: 1, 6, 7)

Praise to Yahweh for the mighty deeds which he has performed on behalf of his people is the central theme of Psalm 103. It is one of the most impressive of all the hymns written in honor of his name. The author has evidently passed through some difficult and trying experiences and he is filled with a spirit of thanksgiving for the way in which Yahweh has sustained him. He realizes, however, that what Yahweh has done for him is only typical of his attitude toward the nation as a whole. It is not the power or majesty of Yahweh that impresses him most of all. It is the love of Yahweh which grips his imagination and takes precedence over everything else. He can see Yahweh's love for Israel even in the afflictions which the nation has had to bear.

> Bless the LORD, O my soul,
>   and forget not all his benefits,
>
> . . .
>
> The LORD works vindication
>   and justice for all who are oppressed.
> He made known his ways to Moses,
>   his acts to the people of Israel.
> The LORD is merciful and gracious,
>   slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.
> (Ps. 103:2, 6-8)

Praise for Jerusalem is expressed most eloquently in Psalm 122. The author of this hymn had been one of a band of pilgrims who made the journey to the central sanctuary and who had been deeply impressed by his visit to the temple. Having returned home, his mind still dwells on the marvelous things he had seen. Thoughts of the city itself were sufficient to awaken within his soul a sense of loyalty and devotion to the place which had played so important a role in the life of the nation. It was not the size of the city nor the military strength of the nation which impressed him. It was the fact that the temple was in the city and this building with its many services symbolized the presence of Yahweh in the hearts and minds of the people. His journey had been the occasion for a deeply religious experience which filled him with joy and appreciation whenever he thought about it. His own personal feelings are revealed in the hymn which he wrote.

> I was glad when they said to me,
> "Let us go to the house of the LORD!"
> Our feet have been standing
> within your gates, O Jerusalem!
>
> . . .
>
> to which the tribes go up,
> the tribes of the LORD,
> as was decreed for Israel,
> to give thanks to the name of the LORD.
> (Ps. 122:1-2, 4)

Yahweh's love for the poor and oppressed is the theme of Psalm 146. It is interesting to note that many different characteristics or attributes of Yahweh were recognized and appreciated by the various psalm writers. For some of them, as we have noted, it was in the forces of nature that he revealed his power and majesty. For others, it was the way in which he had directed the course of history that impressed them most of all. Again, it was Yahweh's protection of his people or his deliverance of them from the house of bondage which brought forth their highest praise. But for the author of this psalm it was Yahweh's care for the afflicted and unfortunate people that seemed to him the most impressive fact of all. It was for this reason that people should sing praises to his name.

> Praise the LORD!
> Praise the LORD, O my soul!
>
> . . .
>
> who executes justice for the oppressed;
> who gives food to the hungry.
>
> . . .
>
> The LORD watches over the sojourners,
> he upholds the widow and the fatherless;
> but the way of the wicked he brings to ruin.
> (Ps. 146:1, 7, 9)

One of the most important festivals in the religious life of the Hebrew people symbolized Yahweh's enthronement as the supreme ruler of all the universe. In the earlier periods of its observance, it was probably designed to counteract the claims of the pagan gods. It meant that Yahweh was superior to any of those deities who had ever challenged his power. Yahweh was supreme in Israel, but more than that he was the god of the earth and any other beings that might exist were subject to his control. Through the teaching of the great prophets the Hebrews had come to think of Yahweh in terms of justice and righteousness as well as power. This meant of course that Yahweh's supremacy in the world would not be fully realized until the principles of justice were recognized and followed by all the nations of the world. That time had not arrived but the people had faith that someday it would come. Thus the service of Yahweh's enthronement came to be an expression of faith that someday his cause would be triumphant on this earth. It was this faith which inspired the author of Psalm 97.

The LORD reigns; let the earth rejoice;
let the many coastlands be glad!

. . .

The heavens proclaim his righteousness;
and all the peoples behold his glory.

. . .

The LORD loves those who hate evil;
he preserves the lives of his saints;
he delivers them from the hand of the wicked.

. . .

Rejoice in the LORD, O you righteous,
and give thanks to his holy name!
(Ps. 97:1, 6, 10, 12)

In contrast with these hymns of praise there are other psalms which express an attitude of sorrow and bitter lamentation. One of the chief reasons which lies back of this attitude is the belief in the idea of retribution. Suffering of all kinds was interpreted to mean that Yahweh was displeased with the conduct of the people. They had sinned against him and punishment must be meted out in order to satisfy the claims of justice. Unlike the majority of persons in our modern world who can always find a good reason for blaming others but who seldom find anything wrong with themselves, the authors of this group of psalms like many others among the ancient Hebrews could recognize the faults that were present in themselves. The prophet Jeremiah had stressed the point that the heart of man is deceitful and desperately wicked.[21] Hence any change of environmental conditions would not be sufficient to improve the status of affairs until a change had taken place within the people themselves. Because of this consciousness of their own guilt and because of a deep desire on their part to make things right with Yahweh, they saw the necessity of making a full confession of their sins. In connection with this they implored Yahweh to deliver them from the plight into which they had fallen.

Not all Hebrew poets were able to reach these heights of self-examination. Some of them did little more than to complain bitterly about their misfortunes and to ask Yahweh for aid in winning victory over their enemies. It was this spirit which found expression in Psalm 44. The author does not have the most exalted conception of Yahweh. He thinks of him primarily as a war-god and he doesn't understand why he allows the Hebrew people to suffer as they have been doing at the hands of their enemies. He describes the plight of the nation in terms of anguish and despair and then he calls upon Yahweh to deliver them.

Yet thou hast cast us off and abased us,
  and hast not gone out with our armies.

. . .

Thou hast made us like sheep for slaughter,
  and hast scattered us among the nations.

. . .

Thou hast made us the taunt of our neighbors,
  the derision and scorn of those about us.

. . .

Rouse thyself! Why sleepest thou, O Lord?
  Awake! Do not cast us off for ever!
Why dost thou hide thy face?
  Why dost thou forget our affliction and oppression?
(Ps. 44:9, 11, 13, 23-24)

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[21] Jer. 17:9.

A very different type of lamentation is expressed in Psalm 22. The author is not speaking for the nation but for himself as an individual. He is in the midst of a terrible crisis and he cries out for help. We do not know just what the afflictions were that troubled him. It may be he had passed through a long period of sickness or that he believed death was at hand. He does not think of his suffering as a punishment for sin nor does he charge Yahweh with being unkind or unjust in his treatment of him. The prayer which he utters comes from a deep sense of despair. There is no one else to whom he may turn and so in sheer desperation he cries out to Yahweh for help.

> My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?
> Why art thou so far from helping me, from the words of my groaning?
> O my God, I cry by day, but thou dost not answer;
> and by night, but find no rest.
> (Ps. 22:1-2)

It was another discouraged and downcast soul whose prayer has been recorded in Psalms 42 and 43. The unity of thought which runs through these two psalms is the basis for believing they were originally a single prayer or at least that they were both spoken by the same individual. The author is one who has suffered a great deal and there are times when his faith is sorely tried. The spirit of homesickness and discouragement is revealed so clearly that it seems quite possible he was one of the exiles who had been driven from his homeland. It may be he had suffered some personal misfortune. At any rate, his enemies had ridiculed and challenged his faith in Yahweh as a god who had the power and the will to do anything in his behalf. At times he was deeply perplexed and like the author of Ecclesiastes he wondered if life was really worth while. But through it all he never abandoned his faith. He looked to Yahweh for strength and believed he would not be disappointed. Because his prayer expressed so well the feelings of many discouraged individuals it came to be used as a part of the devotional literature of the temple.

As a hart longs
for flowing streams,
so longs my soul
for thee, O God.
My soul thirsts for God,
for the living God.
When shall I come and behold
the face of God?
My tears have been my food
day and night,
while men say to me continually,
"Where is your God?"
(Ps. 42:1-3)

The author concludes his prayer with the assurance that God will hear him. He says,

Why are you cast down, O my soul,
and why are you disquieted within me?
Hope in God; for I shall again praise him,
my help and my God.
(Ps. 42:11)

Penitence for one's own sins and a sincere desire to be cleansed from all unrighteousness is expressed beautifully in Psalm 51. The main portion of this psalm was written in the spirit of the great prophets. It reminds us of Jeremiah or one of the prophets in the post-Exilic period, for the author understands that true religion is something more than the offering of sacrifices or the performance of ritual. He knows that what Yahweh desires more than anything else is an humble and a contrite heart. He knows too that a spirit of humility is the only attitude that is appropriate for one who is really loyal to Yahweh. The ideal which he sets forth is indeed a lofty one.

Have mercy on me, O God,
according to thy steadfast love;
according to thy abundant mercy
blot out my transgressions.
Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,
and cleanse me from my sin!

For I know my transgressions,
and my sin is ever before me.
Against thee, thee only, have I sinned,
and done that which is evil in thy sight,
so that thou art justified in thy sentence
and blameless in thy judgment.
Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity,
and in sin did my mother conceive me.

Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward being;
therefore teach me wisdom in my secret heart.
Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean;
wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.
Fill me with joy and gladness;
let the bones which thou hast broken rejoice.
Hide thy face from my sins,
and blot out all my iniquities.

Create in me a clean heart, O God,
and put a new and right spirit within me.
Cast me not away from thy presence,
and take not thy holy Spirit from me.
Restore to me the joy of thy salvation,
and uphold me with a willing spirit.

Then will I teach transgressors thy ways,
and sinners will return to thee.
Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God,
thou God of my salvation,
and my tongue will sing aloud of thy deliverance.

O Lord, open thou my lips,
and my mouth shall show forth thy praise.
For thou hast no delight in sacrifice;
were I to give a burnt offering,
thou wouldst not be pleased.
The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit;
a broken and contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.

(Ps. 51:1-17)

Apparently the ideal was too high for the comprehension of a later editor who was unable to think of loyalty to Yahweh apart from the sacrifices which were offered in the temple at Jerusalem.

For him the changes which might take place within the human heart were only a suitable preparation for the offering of bullocks upon an altar. So he added these words:

> Do good to Zion in thy good pleasure;
>   rebuild the walls of Jerusalem,
> then wilt thou delight in right sacrifices,
>   in burnt offerings and whole burnt offerings;
>   then bulls will be offered on thy altar.
>   (Ps. 51:18-19)

Trust in Yahweh is the dominant theme of a number of psalms. They form an important part of the book because they illustrate the way in which the Hebrew poets could go beyond the thought of their afflictions and their transgressions to a confident hope that Yahweh would provide for them an adequate solution for all their problems. Of the many psalms of trust the best known and the most highly cherished are Psalms 23 and 91. Psalm 23 is an expression of what Yahweh meant to an individual, while in Psalm 91 the author is speaking to others about the power and love of Yahweh both of which are sufficient to provide for the people full protection from all of their enemies. "The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want" is the statement of an individual who had seen and experienced a host of difficulties. He knew what it meant to suffer hardship and he was aware of the fact that death was for him not very far away. Through it all he was sustained and made strong by his faith in a God whose care for individuals was like that of a kind and tender shepherd who gives himself for the lives of his sheep. "He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High, who abides in the shadow of the Almighty" is the message of one who knows from his own experience that there is nothing to fear from things that are without so long as one's inner confidence and trust in Yahweh remains secure.

The Teaching of the Psalms

As we have noted before, the Book of Psalms was composed primarily as an expression of the spirit of worship. Its main purpose was not that of instruction. Nevertheless, its use over the centuries did help to fix in the minds of the people many of the dominant ideas which had played so vital a part in the religious life of its different authors. It would of course be impossible, within the limits of any brief survey of the book, to enumerate the teachings that are set forth in it. Any careful reading of the entire book is sufficient to bring to light the fact that nearly all of the great conceptions which may be found in the other writings of the Old Testament are reflected at least to some degree in the Book of Psalms. This collection of poems which constitutes the book is in one sense of the word a summary of the thinking as well as the religious feelings which characterized the Hebrew people during several centuries of their national history. The ideas which had been cherished most of all were naturally the ones given the greatest amount of emphasis in the poems and songs which were written. We will note a few of the more important ones.[22]

The one idea which certainly takes precedence over all the others pertains to the reality and significance of Yahweh. Apparently we would be correct in assuming that the psalmists wrote primarily for the purpose of making Yahweh real to the hearts and minds of the Hebrew people. They did not produce arguments to prove his existence. That was quite unnecessary for as they saw it no person in his right mind would ever doubt the existence of God. Only a fool could do that. But more important than a mere intellectual assent to the idea of his existence was a sense of relationship to him that would make a real difference in the manner of one's living. That was the crucial problem. The psalmists had themselves found in Yahweh a source of help and spiritual strength. It was this level of experience that they sought to express and they did so in the hope that it might be communicated to others.

There is no single conception of Yahweh which runs through the Book of Psalms but each author reveals to us a part of his own insight into the divine nature. Monotheism is the predominant conception in most of the later psalms but it would be a mistake to suppose this idea was characteristic of the entire book. The Psalms, viewed as a whole, indicate very clearly the process of growth and development in the conception of Yahweh as well as in the ethical ideals associated with his worship. There are many passages in the Book of Psalms which reflect a belief in the existence of other gods than Yahweh. For example, in Psalm 82 we find this statement, "God has taken his place in the divine council; in the midst of the gods he holds judgment." [23] Again, in Psalm 95 we read these words, "For the Lord is a great God, and a great King above all gods." [24] Although we may infer from these passages and others of a similar nature the existence of foreign gods as accepted beliefs on the part of the psalmists, we may be sure these same writers were convinced of Yahweh's supremacy over the deities of any of the foreign nations.

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[22] See in this connection John Paterson, *op. cit.*, Part III.

The character of Yahweh as he was understood by the psalmists is revealed in several ways. One of these is the use of a number of different names in their references to him. He is known as Jehovah or Yahweh, as God or Elohim, as God Almighty or El Shaddai, and again as Adonai or Lord. All of these names had been used in the earlier writings of the Old Testament and each one of them gave emphasis to some particular aspect of the deity. It was understood that he was greater than the meaning attached to any one of them. The terms which we are accustomed to use in connection with the deity such as omnipotence, omniscience, eternal, and unchanging, do not occur in the Hebrew psalter but this does not mean that the ideas which are represented by these terms were absent from the minds of the writers of the psalms. The point of difference is that they found other ways of expressing their conception of him. They spoke of Yahweh as an everlasting God, one whose power and whose goodness would endure throughout all generations. He was a wise being too, for he understood the hearts and minds of people as well as any of their outward acts. He was a just and a righteous God who would not allow sin to go unpunished. At the same time he was a God of loving kindness whose mercy and goodness were always extended to those who would avail themselves of it.

[23] Ps. 82:1.
[24] Ps. 95:3.

Although the psalmists recognized a wide gap between the character of Yahweh and the nature of man, there is nothing in their writings which remotely resembles the doctrine of the total depravity of human beings. They accepted the ancient Hebrew tradition that man was made in the image of God and while it was true that human beings had sinned and fallen far short of the ideal, there was always a possibility of their restoration. The status of man in relation to Yahweh is set forth in Psalm 8 as follows:

> When I look at thy heavens, the work of thy fingers,
> the moon and the stars which thou hast established;
> what is man that thou art mindful of him,
> and the son of man that thou dost care for him?
>
> Yet thou hast made him little less than God,
> and dost crown him with glory and honor.
> (Ps. 8:3-5)

Because the standard which Yahweh had set for his people was so high, none of them were able to measure up to it in every respect. Hence, the attitude of humility was appropriate to each individual. Yahweh could forgive transgressions and cleanse his people from unrighteousness but he could do so only on one condition and that was their willingness to recognize their own shortcomings and allow him to do something for them. Many of their faults would be obvious if they would only examine their lives in the light of the standard which had been given to them. More serious than these defects, however, were the hidden motives which in many instances were not recognized by the individuals themselves. It was consciousness of this fact that led the author of Psalm 19 to say:

> But who can discern his errors?
> clear thou me from hidden faults.
> Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins;
> let them not have dominion over me!
> Then I shall be blameless,
> and innocent of great transgression.
> (Ps. 19:12-13)

In the same spirit the author of Psalm 51 writes:

> Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward being;
> therefore teach me wisdom in my secret heart.
> Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean;
> wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.
> (Ps. 51:6-7)

Unfortunately this conception of a spiritual religion with its emphasis upon inwardness and purity of motives did not find universal acceptance. For many of the people it was too lofty an ideal to grip their imagination and it was therefore necessary to find something on a lower level which they could understand. It was legalism which furnished the answer to this particular problem. Anyone could understand that certain rules of conduct had been given to the people by Yahweh and it was their duty to obey the commands which he had given. Hence the concept of divine law was emphasized more and more during the succeeding years of the post-Exilic period. The law came to be regarded as the standard of goodness and the moral quality of individuals was believed to be determined by their attitude toward it. In harmony with this conception praise for the law came to have an important place in the Book of Psalms. Sometimes the authors appear to rival one another in heaping extravagant praise upon it. Psalm 119, the longest one in the entire collection, is written in praise of this theme.

> Oh, how I love thy law!
> It is my meditation all the day.
>
> . . .
>
> Through thy precepts I get understanding;
> therefore I hate every false way.
> (Ps. 119:97, 104)

A similar attitude is expressed in Psalm 19.

> The law of the LORD is perfect,
> reviving the soul;
> the testimony of the LORD is sure,
> making wise the simple;
> the precepts of the LORD are right,
> rejoicing the heart;

the commandment of the Lord is pure,
enlightening the eyes;
the fear of the Lord is clean,
enduring for ever;
the ordinances of the Lord are true,
and righteous altogether.
(Ps. 19:7-9)

The doctrine of retribution fitted in very well with a legalistic conception of religion. It was an old idea among the Hebrews. We have seen it illustrated in the teachings of the prophets and again in the writings of the sages, especially in the collection of sayings which make up the Book of Proverbs. The historians of the Old Testament had likewise taught that Yahweh was a God who not only rewarded the righteous with the good things of life but he also punished the wicked with an amount of suffering which was proportionate to their guilt. So deeply was this idea ingrained in the minds of the Hebrew people that it is not at all surprising to find it illustrated throughout the Book of Psalms. In Psalm 37, for example, we find a clear statement of this doctrine.

For the wicked shall be cut off;
but those who wait for the Lord shall possess the land.

Yet a little while, and the wicked will be no more;
though you look well at his place, he will not be there.
But the meek shall possess the land,
and delight themselves in abundant prosperity.

. . .

I have been young, and now am old;
yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken
or his children begging bread.
(Ps. 37:9-11, 25)

The idea that human beings, during the course of their earthly existence, receive just what they deserve is expressed again in these words:

Nevertheless I am continually with thee;
thou dost hold my right hand.

> Thou dost guide me with thy counsel,
> and afterward thou wilt receive me to glory.
> Whom have I in heaven but thee?
> And there is nothing upon earth that I desire besides thee.
> (Ps. 73:23-25)

The doctrine of retribution is in harmony with the ideal of justice but it is not in accord with experience as it is frequently observed. Many of the psalmists were keenly aware of this situation and their meditations directed their thought toward a belief in immortality. The idea of Sheol as the final abode of all those who have died was no longer adequate for anyone who understood the problem that is involved in the suffering of innocent persons. Although it would be incorrect to say that the idea of immortality reaches its full or complete development in the Psalms, we can be sure that some of its authors were no longer content with the notion that nothing more was in store for the righteous than a bare and meaningless existence in Sheol. After a statement of the way in which his enemies have surrounded him, the writer of Psalm 17 says:

> As for me, I shall behold thy face in righteousness;
> when I awake, I shall be satisfied with beholding thy form.
> (Ps. 17:15)

This suggestion of something worthwhile which lies beyond the grave is expressed again in Ps. 73:23-25, cited above.

Chapter 19

THE APOCRYPHA

In addition to the writings usually regarded as belonging to the canon of the Hebrew scriptures, there is another collection of books that at various times and places has been recognized as a genuine part of the Old Testament. These books are known as the Apocrypha. The name means, literally, hidden things, and it was first applied to this particular collection of writings because it was understood that they were written not for the enlightenment of their contemporary peoples but for those who would live at some time in the distant future.[1] Until that time their meaning would be hidden even from those who might have the chance to read them. At the appointed time their significance would be made known but only by someone who would possess the proper qualifications for revealing it.

Although this was the original meaning of the term when it was applied to these books, it did in the course of time acquire another and quite different meaning. It was used to designate a collection of writings whose rank or status was regarded as lower than that of the other books included with it in the Old Testament. Thus we find that the apocryphal books have often been considered as appropriate for use in the regular services of worship, but they did not possess the authority necessary for establishing particular points of doctrine.

In the Douay version of the Bible, which for centuries was the official translation for the Catholic church, the apocryphal books have been included in the list of writings which make up the inspired Scriptures of the Old Testament. In most of the Protestant Bibles published since 1827 they have been omitted. However, prior to that time they were usually included, and it should be remembered that for many generations Protestants no less than Catholics regarded these books as a genuine part of the Holy Scriptures.[2] Luther, in translating the Bible into the German language, was the first to assemble these writings in a single group and to place the entire collection at the end of the Old Testament books. Since that time it has been customary in Protestant Bibles, that have included the Apocrypha, to place them between the Old and the New Testaments. Catholic Bibles have not followed this arrangement but have continued the older procedure of having them scattered among the other writings.

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[1] See Edgar J. Goodspeed, *The Story of the Apocrypha* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1939), pp. 1-11.

The problem of the proper status of these writings arose, first of all, from the fact that they were not included in the Hebrew text of the Old Testament as it was known and circulated among the Palestinian Jews of the early Christian centuries. At the same time they were a part of the Bible that had been translated into Greek, and that was in use among the Hellenistic Jews who lived in Egypt. Anyone who compared the two Bibles would thus be led to wonder whether the omission of these books from the Hebrew text had been intentional and if it had been due to their inferior quality.

All the Old Testament books had originally been produced in Aramaic but from the third century B.C. onward it had been customary in certain quarters, especially in Egypt, to translate these scriptures into the Greek tongue. The earliest and most important of these translations was the one which came to be known as the Septuagint version.[3] It was so named because it was understood to have been the work of seventy elders who had been appointed for that purpose. Authentic information is lacking with reference to the authorization of this translation and the precise way in which it was accomplished. We do know that it required a comparatively long period of time and that the work of translating the Pentateuch had been completed by about 250 B.C. We know also that the translation of Hebrew manuscripts was not confined to the books of the Old Testament. The author of the Book of Ecclesiastes had suggested that enough books had been written in his day,[4] but even so, the production of new manuscripts continued long after his death. Some of these writings were so similar, both in form and content, to the earlier ones that had appeared that it was not an easy matter to distinguish between them. As the work of translating continued, one result was the production of a Greek translation of the Old Testament that was considerably longer than the Hebrew text being used by the Jews of Palestine.

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[2] The fact that for centuries these books were considered to be a genuine part of the Bible would in itself be sufficient reason for encouraging a study of them. There are, of course, many other good reasons for becoming familiar with them.

[3] For a brief account of the Septuagint version see R. H. Pfeiffer, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1941), pp. 104-19.

When, in the year 382 A.D., Pope Damascus commissioned Jerome to make a revision of the Latin translation of the Scriptures it was to the Palestinian Hebrew manuscripts rather than to the Greek versions that he went for his text of the original. He discovered, in so doing, that many of the writings which he had been accustomed to regard as a part of the Old Testament were missing in the Hebrew Bibles. These books he called the Apocrypha probably having in mind the story recorded in II Esdras in which reference is made to ninety-four books, twenty-four of which are to be published so that they may be used by the laity, but the remaining seventy books are to be delivered to a chosen group of persons especially qualified to receive the wisdom that they contain.[5] The twenty-four books evidently refer, in this instance, to the canonical books included in the Hebrew Old Testament while the seventy books are additional ones which are to be hidden from the masses of the people.

In order to distinguish still further between these hidden books and the other writings of the Old Testament, Jerome gave a new meaning to the word apocryphal. He used it to designate a class of writings that were of an inferior grade or class. He thus introduced into the Christian world the idea that the apocryphal books are not of equal worth with the other books of the Bible. This conception seems to have been held by Luther and other Protestant reformers. In the various editions of the Protestant Bible which appeared from time to time it became customary to preface the section called the Apocrypha with certain observations to the effect that while these books are suitable for reading in the churches they are not to be regarded as inspired writings nor are they to be used for the purpose of proving particular points of doctrine. For instance, the Geneva Bible published in 1560 A.D. stated that the books should be read, not for doctrine but for a "knowledge of history and instruction in godly manners."

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[4] Eccles. 12:12.
[5] II Esd. 14:39-48.

The publication of the Apocrypha was authorized by several Protestant societies and it continued to appear in most, if not all, of the Protestant Bibles until about the second quarter of the nineteenth century. By this time objections were being raised in different places to the contents of some of these books. The Puritans, for example, complained of the low moral level contained in certain parts of these writings. Gradually the publication of the Apocrypha ceased and in Protestant circles little interest was shown in it until comparatively recent times.

The first direct translation of the Greek Apocrypha into the English language appeared in 1938.[6] The significance of these writings is recognized by an increasing number of biblical students. It is evident that some knowledge of their contents is indispensable for a clear understanding of many parts of the Bible. They constitute one of the most valuable sources for a reconstruction of the religious movements which preceded the rise of Christianity, and they are valuable for a knowledge of the background out of which early Christian doctrines were formulated and developed.

The Books of the Apocrypha may be classified in four main groups or divisions. They are as follows: the historical writings, short stories, wisdom literature, and additions to the canonical books. We will consider them briefly in the order that has been named.

The Historical Writings

The Book of I Esdras is comparable in many respects to the modern historical narrative. It is an imaginative account of the restoration of Palestine following the captivity of the

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[6] See J. M. P. Smith and Edgar J. Goodspeed, *The Complete Bible: An American Translation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1939).

Hebrews in Babylon. The author used, as his chief source materials, the records given in the books of Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah, but he did not follow them exactly nor did he hesitate to enrich his story through the inclusion of other elements for which there seems to be no sound historical basis.

The book opens with an account of the Feast of the Passover as it was celebrated in Jerusalem during the reign of Josiah, king of Judah. Shortly after this event, the king, having gone out contrary to the advice of Jeremiah to fight the Egyptians, was slain in the battle of Megiddo.[7] His death was a tragic blow to the southern kingdom. The nation began to decline immediately and the final collapse was reached at the time of the captivity.

The chief interest of the author is to be found, not in the experience of the captivity nor in the events which led up to it but rather in the activities connected with the return from the Exile and the restoration of the Hebrew state. It was toward the close of a seventy-year period of captivity, during which, according to the prophecy of Jeremiah, the land was permitted to "enjoy her Sabbaths," that Cyrus, king of Persia, issued a proclamation permitting the Jews to return to their own land. They carried back with them five thousand, four hundred and sixty-nine of the sacred dishes which Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the temple and brought to Babylon.[8] On reaching their homeland the returned exiles began the work of rebuilding their city and state. At first they made fairly good progress but during the reign of Artaxerxes the Samaritans and other hostile neighbors sought to hinder them. They appealed to the king and succeeded in convincing him that the work of rebuilding the temple should be stopped. It was not until the second year of the reign of King Darius that the work was resumed.

In connection with the action of Darius the author tells an interesting story of the three guardsmen.[9] These men were employed as a part of the king's official bodyguard. In the course of one of the royal feasts during which Darius, after eating and drinking heavily, had fallen asleep the guardsmen decided to keep awake by entering into a discussion of the question, "What is the strongest thing in the world?" The first one said, "Wine is the strongest." The second one maintained, "The king is strongest." The third one declared, "Women are strongest but truth prevails over everything." These three answers to the question were later presented to the king. He was very much interested and asked that the three guardsmen be brought before him in order that each one might present an argument in support of the answer which he had given. After listening to their three speeches, the king decides that the third guardsman has presented by far the best argument and he offers as a reward anything that the guardsman will ask. It turns out that the guardsman is none other than Zerubbabel, a prominent leader among the Hebrews. His request is that the work of rebuilding the temple in Jerusalem may be allowed to continue. The request is granted and a large number of exiles set forth with Zerubbabel as their leader.

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[7] I Esd. 1:28-29.
[8] I Esd. 2:10-15.
[9] I Esd. 3, 4.

The work of rebuilding continues in spite of severe difficulties that include the opposition of surrounding governors. At the end of four years the work is completed and the new temple is dedicated. The date is just seventy years after the former temple was destroyed. About a century later, Ezra came back from Babylon with another company of Jews who wished to return to their own land.[10] He brought with him a commission from the king, and a large sum of money to be used in restoring the work of the priesthood. A large meeting was held in the temple and the chief address was delivered by Ezra. He recounted in considerable detail the events which had made possible the restoration of the nation, and he upbraided the people because of their negligence in certain matters. He was particularly distressed over intermarriage with foreigners. It is evident that Ezra has the point of view of the priests and in accordance therewith he places the major emphasis upon obedience to all the demands of the law. The people listen intently and they are convinced by the appeal which he makes, for no sooner has he finished speaking than they cry out in a spirit of repentance and ask for forgiveness of their sins. They renew their vows of allegiance to the law and the men promise to put away their foreign wives.

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[10] I Esd. 8, 9.

The Book of II Esdras is, in its completed form, the work of a Greek Christian who wrote sometime between the years 260 A.D. and 270 A.D. Both the beginning and the end of the book are Christian in content but the main part of it is undoubtedly Jewish in origin.[11] The central theme which runs through the entire work is the destruction of the Roman Empire and the exultation of the author in the fact that at last this cruel persecuting power is receiving its just punishment. The language and the style of the book are typical of the apocalyptic writings. Woes are pronounced upon Babylon, a name which is used to symbolize the Roman Empire. Just as divine punishments have been meted out in the past to Egypt, Syria, and other wicked powers, so now it is being visited upon Rome. The awful disasters which have occurred are but evidences of the divine judgment.

The main portion of the book seems to have been derived from a series of Jewish apocalypses. It consists of an account of seven visions that were given to an ancient seer together with the interpretation belonging to each one. In the first vision the seer asks God why Israel should be punished while the heathen power oppressing them is allowed to prosper. The angel Uriel is sent to answer the question.[12] He replies to the seer that God's ways are far above the level of man's ability to understand. He should not be dismayed because of his failure to find an adequate reason for the solution to his problem. The angel then gives assurance that the time is not far distant when the number of the elect or upright will be determined. The same problem is stated again in the second vision. The seer cannot understand why it is that God, having chosen Israel, has given them over to suffer at the hands of their enemies. The answer is essentially the same as the one given in the first vision. However, the righteous may find encouragement in the fact that they can now see signs of the approaching end. In the third vision God proclaims to the seer his reasons for choosing Israel. Then follows a discussion of the problem so troublesome to the seer: "Why should God have abandoned the people whom he has chosen?" The question is partly answered by the suggestion that the punishment of the wicked may not take place immediately but in spite of its postponement it will take place at a future date.

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[11] See E. W. K. Mould, *Essentials of Bible History* (New York: The Ronald Press Co., 1950), pp. 455-56. This document is sometimes called IV Ezra. It belongs to the apocalyptic literature but is included here with the historical writings because of the close relationship of this apocalypse to the history of the times.

[12] II Esd. 10:28.

In the fourth vision the seer beholds a woman who is in mourning. Her only son whom she has long regarded as a gift from God has died on the very day of his wedding. The angel who appears to interpret the vision explains that the mourning woman is but a symbol of the city of Zion. The fate of Jerusalem is a sad fact for one to contemplate but in spite of her sorrow there is occasion for rejoicing when one thinks of the future which God has in store for his people. In the fifth vision there appears a giant eagle having three heads and many wings which enable it to rule over the entire earth. The various wings and heads represent individual rulers who aspire to positions of great power. They are often in conflict one with another. As the seer beholds the strength and activities of this strange beast, he sees a lion emerging suddenly from a forest and pronouncing a judgment of doom upon the eagle. The lion represents the Messiah who will ultimately destroy the heathen powers of the world.[13]

The sixth vision is concerned with the man who arises from the sea. He flies through the air and everything that is seen by him is made to tremble. He creates for himself a great mountain and while he stands upon it he is opposed by a vast multitude of people whom he later slays with the fiery breath proceeding from his mouth. After their destruction has been accomplished the ten lost tribes of Israel make their appearance. These tribes then become his chosen people. The seventh and last vision has to do with the writing of the books. Ezra, who is the seer in all of these visions, hears the voice of God speaking

[13] II Esd. 13:25-40.

to him out of a bush and telling him to gather quickly five persons each one of whom can write rapidly. These five persons are then furnished with writing materials and God dictates to them for a period of forty days. By the end of this time ninety-four books have been written. Ezra is then told that twenty-four of these books (just the number included in the Jewish canon of the Old Testament) are to be published. The remaining seventy books which were written last are to be kept from the multitudes and given to a chosen few who will be able to comprehend their wisdom.[14]

I Maccabees is a narrative or short history of the persecution of the Jews under Antiochus Epiphanes and the war between the Jews and Syrians which followed. It was written by an ardent admirer of the Maccabees who lived in Jerusalem and who wrote during the early part of the first century B.C. The last verse of the book indicates that the writing took place during the high priesthood of Alexander Jannaeus, who was a grandson of one of the three famous Maccabean brothers.[15] This history is one of the best sources that we possess today for reconstructing the events of the Maccabean war. For this reason it is indispensable for an understanding of the backgrounds implied in the Book of Daniel, and in certain passages which belong to the writings of the New Testament.[16]

The history recorded in I Maccabees begins with the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes, king of Syria. The war between the Syrians and Jews was the result of an attempt on the part of the Syrian king to suppress the Jewish religion. Antiochus had ambitions toward the reconstruction of the Alexandrian empire with himself at its head. In order to do this he must have the loyalty of all of his subjects. One of the ways of bringing this about was to promote the worship of himself throughout the various parts of his realm. In countries where polytheism prevailed it would not be a serious matter to add the worship of one more deity but the situation was different for the Jews. They were monotheists and they were forbidden by their law to worship any other than the one true God. Because of the refusal of the Jews to fall in line with his plans, Antiochus determined to break their spirit and force them to abandon the central tenets of their religion.[17] With this end in view he sent his army into Jerusalem and captured the temple. His soldiers entered into the holy place, tore down the altar of burnt offerings, erected another in its place, dedicated the new one to Antiochus, and then consummated the desecration by sacrificing swine upon it.[18] Laws were passed inflicting the death penalty upon any Jews who continued to worship the God of their faith, or who persisted in the observance of ordinances peculiar to their religion.

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[14] II Esd. 14:48.
[15] I Macc. 16:23-24.
[16] Matt. 24:15; Mark 13:4.

At the little village of Modein there lived an aged priest named Mattathias. He had come to this village with his five sons after persecution had broken out in Jerusalem. On a certain day when the people of this village were commanded to offer sacrifices to a heathen god, Mattathias and his sons refused to obey. The aged priest killed one of the Jews who had complied with the order. He killed the officer who was trying to compel them to offer the sacrifices, and he tore down the altar that had been erected for this purpose. He then fled with his sons into the wilderness. Before long the news had spread among the Jews. As soon as they learned what had happened, multitudes of harassed people rushed to Mattathias and joined him in launching a revolt against the Syrians. Because the priest and his sons were familiar with the country they were able to surprise and defeat the enemy in one place after another. Each victory achieved by the Jews encouraged them to believe that the time for their deliverance was at hand.

The hardships of the war were too much for Mattathias and before long he died. Just before his death he called his sons about him and bequeathed to them the great responsibility of carrying on the war. He told them never to lay down their arms until the independence of the Hebrew people had been achieved. Upon the death of his father, Judas Maccabeus, better known as Judas the Hammerer, took over the leadership of the Jewish army. Through a series of remarkable victories he was able to recapture much of the territory that had been occupied by the Syrians. At last, he was able to lead his victorious men back into Jerusalem. He entered the temple, tore down the heathen altar erected by the Syrians, restored the former altar of burnt offerings, and, just three years to a day from the time when Antiochus' soldiers had entered and desecrated the temple, the ancient services were renewed.[19] Candles were lighted, sacrifices were offered, and the ritual of the temple was once more put into operation never again to be interrupted until the temple was destroyed by a Roman army under Titus. After restoring the services of the temple, Judas continued the work of liberating his people. He died in the midst of battle.

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[17] The more immediate cause of Antiochus' action against the Jews was their refusal to accept one of his appointments to the high priesthood. He interpreted their protest as an act of insubordination. See II Macc. 4:7-50.

[18] I Macc. 1:59.

After the death of Judas, his brother, Jonathan, became the leader of the Jewish cause. He achieved many victories and was finally named high priest of the Jews by a new king of Syria. Later he was trapped by his enemies and put to death. He was succeeded by his brother Simon under whose leadership the Jews achieved a status that was practically equal to independence. The Syrian garrison was driven out of Jerusalem and the Jews were allowed to manage their own internal affairs. Like his brother Jonathan, Simon lost his life through treachery. He was slain at a banquet given in his honor. He was succeeded by his son John Hyrcanus who united in the person of the high priest the civil, military, and religious leadership of the Jewish people.

A parallel account of the Maccabean wars [20] is contained in another book known to us as II Maccabees. It was not written to supplement the earlier history of the same period but rather to tell the story from a different point of view. The author of I Maccabees seems to have been a Sadducee who gloried in the priesthood of the Maccabean line. Although he had a high regard for the Jewish law, he did not place its observance above all other considerations. For example, he did not think it wise for the Jews to lay down their arms in the midst of war in order that they might observe the Sabbath. He makes no mention of angels nor does he express any hope for a resurrection after death. II Maccabees is written from the point of view of a Pharisee. The author is a believer in miracles. He writes about the intervention of angels on behalf of the Jews. He believes in a resurrection from the dead and he constantly glorifies the martyrs who have laid down their lives rather than transgress the requirements of the law.[21] He praises those who have observed the Sabbath in time of war and who have faced death rather than yield to the temptation to eat forbidden meat.

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[19] I Macc. 4:37-61.

[20] The account in II Maccabees begins a year earlier than I Maccabees and ends with a report concerning the death of Nicanor. Hence the narrative is parallel with only a portion of I Maccabees.

The story begins with a letter addressed to the Jews in Egypt from their brethren in Jerusalem and other parts of the land of Judea. The purpose of the letter is to urge the observance of the feast of Dedication which is held in commemoration of the time when the services of the temple were restored after the invasion of Antiochus and his Syrian army. The author indicates that he has had access to a five-volume history of the Maccabean wars written by Jason of Cyrene.[22] It is his purpose to write an epitome of this history in order that the Jews of various lands might be made familiar with the events which led to the institution of this important feast. The scope of his history is not so large as that of I Maccabees. He begins with the story of the encroachment upon the temple and its services by the Syrian officers and concludes with an account of the victory of Judas Maccabeus over Nicanor, and the feast which was held in celebration of that event. No mention is made of the death of Judas nor of the respective careers of Jonathan and Simon. It is probable that his Pharisaic tendencies had something to do with the particular point at which he decided to close his narrative. The victory which Judas achieved made possible the restoration of the temple services. With this restoration, observance of the law could be re-established and that was the point which needed to be emphasized.

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[21] II Macc. 5:25-26; 6:11.
[22] II Macc. 2:23-31.

Many of the major theses of Pharisaism were illustrated in the events which he recorded. For instance, the belief that God will punish those who profane his holy sanctuary is set forth in the story of Heliodorus.[23] This Syrian officer had entered the temple for the purpose of robbing the treasury. This sacrilege was promptly punished by angels who struck down and beat the intruder. Supreme loyalty to the requirements of the law is illustrated in the account of Eleazar and the seven brothers who, enduring the most horrible tortures that can be imagined, died rather than yield to the demands of the Syrians that they transgress the law forbidding them to eat swine's flesh.[24] Although each of the sons, before being tortured to death in the presence of the mother and the remaining brothers, was given a chance to obtain his freedom by eating pork, not one of them yielded. They faced martyrdom for their faith and they did it triumphantly, inspired by their hope in a resurrection and the glorious reward in store for those who remained faithful in the midst of tribulations. The martyrs of this story are included in the list of the faithful to which reference is made in Chapter 11 of the Book of Hebrews. (Hebrews 11:35-37)

Short Stories

Two short stories are included in the Apocrypha of the Old Testament. The first is called Tobit and the second Judith. In each of these the setting for the story is placed in some particular period of Hebrew history and the author writes as though he were reporting actual events which took place. However, the wide discrepancies which may be noted between various parts of the narratives and the actual facts which we know from other sources lead to the conclusion that these stories are not historical in character, but must be regarded as works of fiction written for the specific purpose of setting forth certain religious ideals that were characteristic of their age.

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[23] II Macc. 3:13-30.
[24] II Macc. 6:18-31.

The story of Tobit was written by an Egyptian Jew during the early part of the second century B.C.[25] Tobit, the hero of the story, was a godly man living in northern Israel at the time of the Assyrian invasion. His righteous character is indicated by the fact that he refrained from the worship of idols, attended regularly the feasts at Jerusalem, and gave three-tenths of his income to charity.[26] Carried into captivity by the Assyrians, he soon wins the favor of the king, obtains a good position and acquires a considerable amount of wealth, a portion of which he sends to a relative in Ragae for safe keeping. His habit of giving a decent burial to the Jews who have fallen as victims of the Assyrians offends the next king and Tobit is stripped of his property and forced to flee for his life. Later, he is recalled but while engaged in acts of mercy he is stricken with blindness and forced to depend upon the labor of his wife for his support. In the midst of this distress he longs to die.[27]

Meantime, a kinswoman named Sarah who lived in Media was offering a similar prayer with reference to her own situation. She had been married seven times but in each instance the husband died shortly after the wedding. It seemed to her that life had lost all of its meaning and there was no good reason why she should continue to live.[28] About this time Tobit decides to send his son Tobias to Ragae in order to procure the money which had been previously sent to that place. Tobias secures a companion for the trip. They stop by a stream long enough to catch a large fish. At the suggestion of the guide they take the heart, liver, and gall of the fish with them on their trip.[29] They stop in Media and Tobias is married to Sarah. On the night of the wedding the evil spirit called Asmodeus is driven away by the use of incense which has been mixed with the heart and liver of the fish. On their return to the home of Tobit it is revealed that the traveling companion is none other than Azariah, one of the seven holy angels. Through application of the gall taken from the fish, Tobit is cured of his blindness and thus the story is given a happy ending.

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[25] For an introduction to the Books of Tobit and Judith see R. H. Pfeiffer, *A History of New Testament Times with an Introduction to the Apocrypha* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1949), pp. 258-312.

[26] Tob. 1:3-8.

[27] Tob. 3:6.

[28] Tob. 3:15.

[29] Tob. 6:1-8.

The story of Judith, similar in many respects to the Book of Esther, has for its heroine a Jewish woman who succeeds in a daring attempt to defeat the Assyrian army and thus brings about the liberation of her own people. The story finds its setting in the early post-Exilic period although Nebuchadnezzar who is called king of the Assyrians is presented as trying to overrun the land owned by the Hebrews. The city of Bethulia, where Judith lives, has been besieged by the Assyrians under the leadership of their general, Holofernes. He decides to hold a council of war and is informed by one of the men that unless the Jews disobey the God whom they worship there will be no chance of defeating them.[30] Holofernes is furious when told of this and immediately gives orders for his men to seize the springs from which the people of the city obtain their water supply.[31]

With their water supply cut off, the Jews inside the city are put in a very difficult position. It is at this point that Judith enters the story. She is a pious Jewish widow who has long been known for her rare beauty. After praying for strength to carry out the plans she has in mind, she dresses herself in her most attractive clothes and, accompanied by her maid, she makes her way to the camp of the Assyrians. She pretends to be a friend of Holofernes and proposes a plan that will make it easy for him to capture the besieged city. Holofernes is enamored with her beauty and makes arrangements for her to stay in the camp. On the fourth day of her visit Holofernes makes a great feast and sends one of his servants to persuade Judith to eat and drink with him. She gladly accepts the invitation and appears before Holofernes clad in her finest attire. She joins in the gayety of the feast but true to the principles of the Hebrew faith she refuses to eat any food except that which has been prepared by her maid.[32] After the feast has been finished the other guests take their leave and Judith is left in the tent alone

[30] Jth. 5:20-21.
[31] Jth. 7:12-15.
[32] Jth. 12:17-20.

with Holofernes, who by this time has fallen into a drunken sleep. Taking advantage of the situation she secures a giant sword belonging to Holofernes and with it she cuts off his head.[33] After placing his head in the bag which she used to carry her provisions she left with her maid under the cover of darkness and quickly made her way back to the city of the Jews. Upon her arrival she delivered the head of Holofernes to the captain of the Jewish army. Following the instructions of Judith the Jews launched an attack upon the Assyrians who were, by that time, unnerved by the loss of their leader. In the midst of their confusion they beat a hasty retreat. Judith sings a song of victory and the Jews having taken the spoils from the Assyrian camp are unmolested by their enemies for a long period of time.

Wisdom Literature

The largest book in the Apocrypha is called Ecclesiasticus. The name is derived from the Greek word which means "church." It is here used to designate a book which may appropriately be used in connection with the worship services of the church. The book belongs to the wisdom literature produced by the Hebrews. It is sometimes called The Wisdom of Jesus ben-Sirach. It contains fifty-one chapters and covers a wide range of subjects. The general tone of the book is similar to that of the Book of Proverbs. The author belongs to the class of sages or wise men, and, judging from the contents of his book, one would draw the conclusion that he was numbered among the most learned and capable representatives of the group. He wrote during the first half of the second century B.C. Because he wrote at a relatively late date his book was not included in the canon of Old Testament books.[34] Its real worth is, however, evident to anyone who is willing to read through the entire contents. It is probably the best known and the most widely used of all the apocryphal writings.

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[33] Jth. 13:8-9.

[34] Because the author's name was fixed to this manuscript it could not be attributed to someone who had lived at an earlier date.

The book portrays a broad and sympathetic mind. In an age when a majority of the Hebrews, influenced by the priestly conception of holiness, believed that they should have nothing to do with the literature or customs of the foreign nations it is interesting to note that at least one Hebrew writer had the ability to understand and to appreciate the achievements of people other than his own. He tells us that he has traveled a great deal and has gathered from many different people the elements of his wisdom. He has been no less a student of his own people. He possesses a thorough knowledge of all the great sayings of Israel's wise men. He is a lover of wisdom and he holds in high esteem all those who seek it. Toward the close of his book he makes a summary of the teachings of Israel's great men and in the imposing list of names which he presents he includes his own.[35] He does so, not in the spirit of boasting, but because he regards himself as belonging to the distinguished company of Israel's sages.

The author of Ecclesiasticus has a wide range of interests. He discusses practically all themes mentioned in the Book of Proverbs and to these he adds many others. His teachings compare favorably with those found in other parts of the wisdom literature. They constitute an excellent supplement to the sayings recorded in Proverbs. For instance, with reference to the importance of holding one's tongue, we read in Ecclesiasticus, "A slip on the pavement is better than a slip of the tongue, thus the fall of the wicked comes swiftly."[36] And again, "Have you heard anything? Let it die with you! A fool travails because of a word, even as a woman travails of a child."[37] And, in the same spirit, "A silent woman is a gift from the Lord!"[38] The author shares the contempt for fools characteristic of Proverbs. He says, "Weep gently for the dead, for he hath found rest, but the life of a fool is worse than death."[39] And concerning dishonesty in connection with business transactions we read, "As a nail sticks fast between the joinings of stones, so sin thrusts itself in between buying and selling."[40]

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[35] Ecclus. 50:27.
[36] Ecclus. 20:18.
[37] Ecclus. 19:10-11.
[38] Ecclus. 26:14.
[39] Ecclus. 22:11.

A wide range of experiences together with keen powers of observation led to such practical maxims as the following: "A man's attire proclaims his occupation, but his gait shows what he is."[41] "A friend cannot be known in prosperity; and an enemy cannot be hidden in adversity."[42] "Sound sleep cometh of moderate eating."[43] "He who builds his house with other men's money is as one who gathers stones for his sepulchral mound."[44]

The hope of a personal immortality is absent in the earlier writings of the Old Testament. Not until the Persian period which brought the Hebrews more directly into contact with the ideas and beliefs of other peoples do we find any clear expression relative to the acceptance of this idea. By the time ben-Sirach wrote his book, this belief was held by some of the Jewish sects but there is no statement of it in Ecclesiasticus. In place of it, we do find something about the survival which one may achieve by living on in the minds of his fellow-men and those who will come after them. "Be in fear for your name, for that abides longer for you than thousands of precious treasures. Life's goods last for limited days, but the reward of a name for days without number."[45] In common with other Jewish writers, ben-Sirach believes that at death men go down to Sheol where there is no consciousness or remembrance of the former things that have happened. "Fear not death, it is your destiny. Remember that generations past and future share it with you."[46] "Whether you live a thousand, or a hundred, or ten years, in Sheol there are no reproaches regarding life."[47]

The Wisdom of Solomon is a short book written for the purpose of refuting the skeptical arguments set forth in the

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[40] Ecclus. 27:2.
[41] Ecclus. 19:30.
[42] Ecclus. 12:8.
[43] Ecclus. 31:20.
[44] Ecclus. 41:12-13.
[45] Ecclus. 41:3.
[46] Ecclus. 41:4.
[47] Wisd. of Sol. 2:24.

Book of Ecclesiastes. It was probably written in Alexandria by a Jew who lived in that city and who, as a result of living there, had imbibed much of the culture and philosophy of the cosmopolitan city. He wrote in the name of King Solomon and seemed anxious to make it appear that this man so famed for his wisdom was really the author of the book. The marks of late origin were, however, too obvious to be set aside by this claim of ancient authority and in spite of the claim and the orthodox character of its contents it was not included among the canonical books.

The inclusion of the Book of Ecclesiastes in the Old Testament Apocrypha is clear evidence of orthodox thinking on the part of some of Israel's sages.

Like the other books belonging to this group, Wisdom of Solomon is a treatise in which the highest praise is given to wisdom. The author identifies wise living with righteousness. He denounces idolatry and other forms of wickedness. His book contains one of the earliest references to the belief in a personal devil.[48] The arguments of Ecclesiastes concerning the futility of human striving and the absence of any sound basis for the belief in immortality are here attributed to the ungodly. "For the ungodly said, reasoning with themselves but not aright, Our life is short and tedious, and in the death of a man there is no remedy; neither was there any man known to return from the grave." [49] In answer to these false conclusions we are told, "Such things did they imagine and were deceived. As for the mysteries of God they know not: neither hoped they for the wages of righteousness, nor discerned a reward for blameless souls." [50]

Again we are told, "The souls of the righteous are in the hand of God, and there shall no torment touch them." [51] "For though they be punished in the sight of men, yet is there hope of immortality. And having been a little chastised, they shall be greatly rewarded." [52]

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[48] Wisd. of Sol. 2:1.
[49] Wisd. of Sol. 2:21-22.
[50] Wisd. of Sol. 3:1.
[51] Wisd. of Sol. 3:4.
[52] See Edgar J. Goodspeed, *op. cit.*, pp. 31-33.

Additions to Canonical Books

In the Greek manuscripts of the Old Testament some of the books contain materials that are not found in the Hebrew versions. The most probable explanation of this is that these materials were written by Jews who lived in the Hellenistic era and either inserted in the text of books that were already written or else added to them. The Book of Daniel is one that was treated in this way. Just how many additions were made to this book we do not know, for the oldest Greek manuscripts are not all alike. At least four distinct additions have been recognized. One of these is the Prayer of Azariah which was inserted between different parts of Chapter 3 of the Book of Daniel, where it forms a part of the story concerning the three Hebrews who were thrown into the fiery furnace by King Nebuchadnezzar. The prayer which was offered by Azariah in the midst of the fire is one of deep penitence and confession because of the sad state of Israelean affairs. The conditions described correspond closely to those which prevailed in Palestine at the beginning of the Maccabean wars.

A second addition is the "Song of the Three Children." This is a song of praise and thanksgiving attributed to the three Hebrews who were thrown into the fiery furnace. It was written by a Jew who had experienced the trials and hardships of the Maccabean war and who rejoiced in the deliverance that had come to his people. He calls upon all nature to join men and the angels in singing praises to God. The song is arranged in antiphonal form, the response "Sing praise to him and greatly exalt him forever" occurring thirty-two times. The sentiment and arrangement of the song made it suitable for use in services of worship.

The History of Suzanna is, according to some manuscripts, another addition to Daniel. It is the story of a beautiful Jewess who was the wife of a rich and prominent Hebrew living in Babylon. Two of the Jewish elders who frequently visited at her home had fallen in love with her. When she spurned their advances they retaliated by charging her with the sin of adultery. She was condemned to death. Just as the members of the community were about to stone her, Daniel appeared on the scene. He began to examine the testimony given by the witnesses and soon uncovered the fact that they had lied about Suzanna. He succeeded in proving the innocence of Suzanna and the guilt of those who had brought false charges against her in order to conceal the inquity of which they were guilty. Suzanna was set free and those who had conspired against her were put to death.

Bel and the Dragon were written for the purpose of ridiculing idolatry. The Persian king, Cyrus, in the story of Bel, asks his friend and companion Daniel why he does not worship Bel. He calls attention to the large quantities of food which the god consumes every day. At the request of Daniel, the king places the usual amount of food including flour, oil, and meat in the temple and then he has the doors closed and sealed. Daniel is clever enough to have the floor sprinkled with ashes. In the morning when they came to the temple the food was gone. The king believes that Bel has consumed it but Daniel points to the footprints on the floor and proves that the food has been taken by the priests and their families who entered the room through a trap-door.

The story of the Dragon is that of a serpent whom the people worshiped as a god. Daniel denies that the serpent possesses any divine power and to prove his claim he brings about its death by feeding it large lumps composed of pitch, fat, and hair. The Babylonians are indignant because of this and they demand at once that Daniel be put to death. The king finally yields to the pressure brought upon him and reluctantly gives the order for Daniel to be thrown into a den of lions. Although the animals are ravenously hungry they do not harm Daniel. The prophet Habbakkuk is caught up by an angel and is miraculously brought to the aid of Daniel by supplying him with food to eat. On the seventh day of Daniel's imprisonment the king comes to mourn his loss. Seeing him alive and unharmed in the den he gives orders for Daniel to be released and for his enemies to be thrown to the lions. No sooner are they thrown into the den than the lions pounce upon them, crushing them to death.

The Rest of Esther, although compiled in most editions of the Apocrypha, were originally inserted between appropriate parts of the older book. The purpose of these additions seems to have been the injection of a religious element into an otherwise secular piece of writing. The author wants to establish the idea of a supernatural intervention on behalf of the Hebrews. The first addition is an account of a dream given to Mordecai in which forthcoming events are miraculously revealed to him. Other additions purport to be the actual texts of two decrees issued against the Jews, prayers offered by both Mordecai and Esther, an account of the appearance of Esther before the king, an interpretation of Mordecai's dream, and a postscript which states that the book was brought to Egypt during the fourth year of Ptolemy and Cleopatra or about 114 B.C.

The Book of Baruch is, in some of the older Greek manuscripts, attached to the Book of Jeremiah. Its purpose was to interpret the misfortunes which had overtaken the Jews and to assure those who were suffering that a brighter future is in store for them. The author makes it appear that the book was written by the companion and secretary of Jeremiah during the Babylonian exile. During the fifth year of the captivity, Baruch is sent to Jerusalem with a sum of money to be used in support of the temple worship. He tells the Jews whom he visits to pray for Nebuchadnezzar and the rulers of Babylon. They are not to harbor the spirit of revenge and they are encouraged to be loyal to the empire. The first part of the book contains a prayer of repentance and confession of sin acknowledging that their calamities are only a just punishment. The second part includes a poem in praise of wisdom. The third section is a concluding message of hope which contains the assurance that God will surely deliver his people.

The Epistle of Jeremiah is another insertion which has often been included in the Book of Baruch. Although written in the first century A.D. the letter is represented as coming from the hand of Jeremiah. Its purpose is to warn the Jews against the worship of idols. The captives in Babylon are warned that they will remain in exile for seven generations. During this time they will see a great deal of Babylonian idolatry but they must not be led astray by it. The idols are declared to be helpless. They have to be protected from robbers, from decay, and various other things. When they fall down they are powerless to regain their former position. All the food given to them is really consumed by the priests. The idols are as useless as a scarecrow in a cucumber patch. The rotting of their clothes is further evidence that they are not gods.

The Prayer of Manasseh usually stands by itself in the list of apocryphal books but it is really a supplement to the history that is recorded in II Chronicles. Jewish writers had been puzzled to know why a wicked king such as Manasseh would continue to reign for such a long period of time, while other kings who were morally better would be killed in battle or in some other way be removed from office. A partial explanation had been offered by the Chronicler in his assertion that Manasseh had repented of his sins and prayed for forgiveness. (II Chron. 33:19) The apocryphal prayer of Manasseh was an ideal one to have been offered by a repentant Hebrew king. It was written by an Hellenistic Jew at a date not far from the close of the Maccabean era. It is one of the great prayers that came out of that troublesome period. It consists of an acknowledgment of the greatness of God, a confession of sin, and an earnest prayer on the part of a penitent sinner that God will forgive him and be merciful in his dealings toward him.

Chapter 20

THE PSEUDEPIGRAPHA

The Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament is another collection of Hebrew writings which exerted a profound influence upon the development of late Judaism. These writings are also significant as source materials for the growth and formulation of early Christian doctrines. They were never admitted to the canon of the Holy Scriptures nor were they included in the collection of apocryphal writings which we considered in the previous chapter. Nevertheless, they represent an important type of religious thinking and the study of them is something that ought not to be neglected. The influence of these writings upon the literature and thought of the New Testament is considerable. Evidence of this can be seen in the fact that New Testament authors do not hesitate to quote from this literature[1] and, in some instances, a general familiarity with their contents seems to be taken for granted on the part of both the writer and the person who reads it.

The most of these writings are apocalyptic in character. They are filled with the records of dreams and elaborate visions that, for the most part, are interpreted as revelations concerning the events which are going to take place at some future time. Other writings include historical documents, sacred legends, psalms, and certain fragments which belong to the Hebrew wisdom literature. The entire collection is named the Pseudepigrapha because the respective writings are attributed to individuals who lived a long time before the date when these documents were actually composed. There are several reasons why these manuscripts were produced in this particular manner. In the first place it was a method of establishing a certain prestige for the writings in question. By thus being associated with the name of some great and distinguished person the influence of a particular book would be bound to be extended. Then, too, the use of this literary device would make it appear that a given message had been handed down from ancient times thus acquiring the peculiar authority that is usually attached to documents that are believed to be very old. Again, if the belief prevailed that Yahweh no longer spoke directly to human beings, this method of attributing authorship would overcome that difficulty by placing the particular writing in question back in the period when such revelations were believed to have been made.

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[1] See I Cor. 6:2; II Thess. 2:3; Jude 1:9, 14.

A further reason for these pseudepigraphs may be seen in the fact that the period during which the most of them were produced was dominated by the idea of the supremacy of law. The last three centuries before the beginning of the Christian era are characterized by a remarkable development of the spirit of legalism. It was during this period that the first five books of our Old Testament came to be known as the Book of the Law, the most inspired and, for that reason, the most authoritative of all the Hebrew sacred writings. This new era during which the spirit of legalism was particularly dominant was inaugurated by the work of Ezra and Nehemiah.[2] It was a part of the program which they had in mind for the reconstruction of the Hebrew state, and for the preservation of the ancient ideals which belonged to their religion. This new emphasis given to the conception of law was necessarily at the expense of prophecy.[3] Inasmuch as the law was now regarded as the supreme expression of the will of Yahweh, little or no place remained for the exercise of the prophetic function. Prophecy was succeeded by apocalyptic writing, and the literature of the entire period was strictly subordinated to the legalistic ideal. During this period the most effective means of winning support for the newer writings was to attribute them to individuals who lived before the prophetic era came to its close.

The following account of these writings is based upon the studies contained in the second volume of Charles' monumental work *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament.*[4] The classification of the writings which is presented here is essentially the same as the one given in this book.

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[2] See Ezra 9, 10; Neh. 13.

[3] This statement has reference primarily to the form in which the messages were given. It was no longer possible to gain acceptance by merely using "Thus saith Yahweh."

The Historical Writings

In no single one of the writings belonging to the Pseudepigrapha is the idea of the absolute supremacy of Yahweh's law more pronounced than in the Book of Jubilees, a document written by a Pharisaic Jew during the late second century B.C. The main purpose of the book seems to have been to counteract any tendency to disparage the law or to regard it as a temporary arrangement having to do with only a particular phase of Hebrew history. The author is convinced that the law has an everlasting validity. It is older than the world and it will survive all the transitory movements of earth.[5] The book is a spirited defense of orthodox or legalistic Judaism against the liberalizing influences that have emanated from Hellenistic sources. It is designed to glorify the law by making it the central factor in relation to which the great events of the past and the future must be interpreted.

The whole document is presented as a revelation of Yahweh to Moses.[6] It purports to give, in accordance with this revelation, a record of events reaching from the time of the creation to the setting up of the messianic kingdom. The early part of the history, which precedes the time when Yahweh spoke to Moses, is given for the purpose of showing that the law was rigidly observed by the patriarchs. Hence its validity reaches back even to the earliest times. Though it was revealed in time, the law transcends time and thus partakes of the nature of eternity. After the time of Moses the law was preserved by the priests and through them it has been made known to the people. The history of the world from creation until Sinai is written from a particular point of view. Just as the author of the Book of Kings wrote his history from the point of view of the Deuteronomic law,[7] and the author of Chronicles told the story of Judah from the standpoint of the priestly ideal,[8] so the author of Jubilees presents his narrative as illustrative of the legalistic ideal in early times. In this way he is able to project the ideals characteristic of late Judaism into the earliest periods of human history.

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[4] R. H. Charles, *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1913).

[5] Bk. Jub. 1:26-27.

[6] Bk. Jub. 1.

The purpose of the book includes more than the writing of history. The author is anxious to declare his faith in the final triumph of those who are obedient to all the demands of the law. Written during the most peaceful years of the Maccabean era, it looks forward to the early establishment of the messianic kingdom. This kingdom will be ushered in by the advent of a Messiah who will come not from the line of Levi, as was believed in some quarters, but from the line of Judah. The author did not look for any sudden catastrophic event but believed a gradual transformation would take place upon the earth. The effects of this transformation will be seen in both the moral and the physical realms. They will include, on the moral side, the achievement of the ideal which can be reached only through the fulfilment of the moral and ritualistic demands of the law. Once the kingdom has been established men will live on the earth for as long as a thousand years.[9] During this time the forces of evil will be held in abeyance. At the end of the period the final judgment will take place.

According to this writer, the standard of the judgment will be the requirements that are set forth in the Jewish law. For this reason the Gentile nations will be pronounced guilty and their punishment will be meted out to them. No hope is entertained for their repentance. Only those who have faithfully observed the Jewish law will be saved. Following the judgment which will be pronounced upon the wicked, the righteous will enter into an immortal life of the spirit. There will be no resurrection of the body but the saints will continue in an existence that is similar to the one now enjoyed by the inhabitants of heaven.

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[7] According to this history the fate of the Jewish nation was determined by the attitude of the people toward the Deuteronomic law of the central sanctuary.

[8] According to this history the fate of the Jewish people was determined by the attitude of their people toward the religious institutions such as the sabbath, circumcision, prohibition of blood, and the Passover.

[9] Bk. Jub. 23:27-30.

The Book of Jubilees is one of the most important in the Pseudepigrapha. Its defense of Judaism is accomplished by a threefold emphasis. First, there is a distinct attempt to glorify the Jewish law. The author's enthusiasm in this respect is displayed by the fact that he not only declares the law to be timeless in its nature but he insists that it is the rule obeyed even in heaven. Second, the book emphasizes the moral supremacy of Israel and urges in this connection a complete separation of its people from the Gentiles. Finally, the author pronounces a judgment of doom upon all the Gentile nations and predicts a triumphant and happy future for all those who have diligently obeyed the precepts of the law.

In contrast with this extreme veneration for the law, a different attitude is displayed in the Book of Zadok. Much of this work has been lost, but in the fragment which remains we have a brief account of the beliefs and expectations held by a group of reformers who called themselves "Sons of Zadok." The reform movement which this document represents began as a protest against the formalism and irregularities of the priesthood. It was essentially an ethical movement and designed to perpetuate the spirit and moral ideals of the ancient prophets. While the members of this group recognized the law as coming from Yahweh, they did not place it upon a higher plane than the prophetic writings. The prophets were equal to any of the teachers of the law. If, indeed, any distinction should be made between the two groups it should be in favor of the former.

The book was probably written during the latter part of the first century B.C.[10] Because the text is incomplete we do not have a full account of either the activities of the sect or of the beliefs which they cherished. We do know that they look forward to the coming of a Messiah who would be descended from a nonpriestly source on the father's side. They did not, however, believe that the Messiah would come from either of the tribes of Judah or Levi. The Messiah would be known as a

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[10] See R. H. Charles, *op. cit.,* pp. 785-97.

"Teacher of Righteousness."[11] He would appear "at the end of the days"[12] and with his appearance the reign of law would be brought to its close. Other events are also mentioned in connection with the advent of the Messiah. It is probable that the Apostle Paul had this document in mind when he wrote to the Thessalonians concerning events which must take place before the coming of the Day of the Lord.[13]

Sacred Legends

The Letter of Aristeas claims to have been written by a Greek court official who lived in Alexandria at the time of Ptolemy Philadelphus. Certain statements contained within the letter indicate that it was actually written at a later date. The most probable date for its composition is somewhere in the half century between 130 B.C. and 70 B.C.[14] The letter purports to be an account of the circumstances which led to the making of the Septuagint version of the Hebrew writings. The letter is really an apologetic discourse for the teachings contained in the Jewish law and in the Hebrew books of wisdom. It is not in the strict sense an historical document although it is valuable as a means of indicating the ideas which prevailed at the time when it was written. It deals with past events in much the same way as they are treated in the modern historical novel.

The author was an Alexandrian Jew who was sympathetic toward the doctrines held by the Pharisees. He was, however, more liberal in his attitude toward Greek culture than was true of most of the Pharisees. For example, he identifies the Hebrew God with the Greek Zeus and he teaches that God's power extends throughout the universe. He is the source of all things. From God come both blessings and evil. He sways the lives of men and responds to the requests which human beings make of him. He is not only an omnipotent being, but is kind and forgiving in his dealings with men. The forbearance of God is particularly emphasized.

[11] Zadokite Fragment 1:7; 9:53.
[12] Zadokite Fragment 6:1.
[13] II Thess. 2:3.
[14] R. H. Charles, *op. cit.*, pp. 83-87.

The chief interest of the writer is not theology but ethics. He praises the Hebrew law because of its superb moral quality. He believes in the divine origin of the law and holds that it is perfect, free from blemishes of any sort.[15] Because of his high regard for the law the author conceives of goodness in terms of obedience to its commands. Morality and religion are, for him, closely related. The good life is one that conforms as closely as possible with the moral ideal that is embodied in the law. It is in this sense that God may be regarded as the starting point for a doctrine of ethics. It is with the moral rather than the ritualistic requirements of the law that the writer is impressed. He discourses at length upon the virtues of kindness, justice, and temperance. He advocates clemency in dealing with offenders and expresses in a negative form the idea of the Golden Rule.[16]

The Books of Adam and Eve belong to a group of legends produced by the Hebrews shortly before the beginning of the Christian era. They represent popular beliefs concerning the events which followed immediately after the expulsion of Adam and Eve from Paradise. According to the narrative they left the garden of fruit trees which was separated from the earth by a low wall. They journeyed westward for a period of eighteen years and two months. During this time Cain and Abel were born. It was revealed to Eve in a dream that Abel would be killed by his brother. After the tragedy took place the angel Michael comforted the sorrowing parents and promised them another son.[17]

The narrative goes on to describe a death-bed scene in which Adam is lying ill surrounded by sixty-three of his children whom he wishes to bless. In response to Adam's plea, Seth sets out with his mother Eve for the Gates of Paradise to pray for oil from the Tree of Life. On the way they are attacked by a powerful beast. At first they are unable to protect themselves but finally they succeed in frightening the beast with threats of divine judgment. On their return home Adam accuses his wife of bringing sin into the world and asks that she tell the children

[15] Aris. 311-13.
[16] Aris. 207.
[17] Bk. Adam and Eve xxi:1-3.

how it came about that she was deceived. Eve then relates the story of her deception and the events which followed. Before she finishes her account of the things that happened in the garden, she is permitted to witness marvelous scenes during which some coming events are revealed to her, including a reconciliation with her husband. However, she falls asleep when God comes down to earth preparatory to the burial of Adam. Adam's sin is pardoned before he dies and his soul is given to the archangel Michael to be cleansed and kept in Paradise until the time of the resurrection.[18] An account is given of Eve's death. This is preceded by a list of instructions which Seth should set up in commemoration of both his parents.

The Martyrdom of Isaiah is another Jewish legend which probably belongs to the first century of the Christian era. It opens with the story of a summons which King Hezekiah sends to Manasseh and to the prophet Isaiah. They are to come to his bedside and receive from him his dying commands. The king urges his son to be loyal to the religion of his father and to carry out the instructions that have been given by the prophet. No sooner has he finished speaking than Isaiah reminds him that all his words have been spoken in vain. Manasseh will depart from the ways of Yahweh and will become a servant of the evil one, Beliar. He will persecute the prophets and even go so far as to put Isaiah to death by having him sawed asunder.[19]

After the death of Hezekiah, Manasseh turns to evil ways and causes Israel to indulge in all sorts of wickedness. Isaiah withdraws to Bethlehem. Later he goes into the mountains beyond the city. He spends two years in hiding at which time he mourns the sins which prevail in the land. After a time his hiding place is revealed by a false prophet who trumps up a threefold charge against him. He accuses Isaiah of prophesying the destruction of Jerusalem calling it "Sodom" and its inhabitants "Gomorrah." Manasseh then causes Isaiah to be sawed in two with a wood saw while false prophets stand by deriding him.[20]

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[18] Bk. Adam and Eve li:1.
[19] Asc. Isa. 1:9.
[20] Asc. Isa. 5:9-14.

Apocalypses

One of the most valuable sources for reconstructing the religious developments of late Judaism is to be found in the collection of writings known as the Book of Enoch. This book, in the form which we have it today, is the product of several writers who were separated in point of time and who represent a variety of points of view. A wide range of topics is discussed in the various parts of the book. Some of these are secular in character although the major themes have to do with problems that are more directly related to religious practices and beliefs. The editor who made the final arrangement of the materials placed the writings in five groups or sections thus making the divisions correspond to the five books of the law, the five parts of the Book of Psalms, and similar arrangements found in Proverbs, and Ecclesiasticus. The importance with which the literature of Enoch was regarded by the early Christians is indicated by the fact that direct quotations are made from it by at least one writer of the New Testament.[21]

The first section opens with an account of a vision given to the patriarch Enoch, not for the people of his own age, but for those who would live at a particular time then far distant in the future. A Holy One will descend to earth to execute judgment upon all of the ungodly. It will be a time of tribulation and distress for all the wicked, but the righteous have nothing to fear for God will protect them and give them righteousness and peace all the days of their lives. The fate of the fallen angels, referred to as the "Watchers" is described at considerable length. Together with the evil Azazel they ask Enoch to intercede before God in their behalf. He does not respond to their request but pronounces doom upon them instead. In the visions which are given to him, Enoch visits Sheol, or the underworld. Later he is permitted to view the throne of God situated on top of one of the seven mountains.[22] Nearby stands the Tree of Life. On his return to earth he gazes upon Jerusalem in which the righteous are going to dwell, while beyond lies the accursed valley where the wicked will be tormented within sight of the righteous.[23]

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[21] Jude 1:14.
[22] En. 24:1-6.

The second section contains a series of parables, the first of which opens with an account of the impending judgment. So severe is the punishment that is meted out to the wicked that "it had been good for them if they had not been born." [24] As Enoch looks upon the dwelling place of the righteous he is quite overcome with the scene which lies before him. He beholds the Lord of Spirits who knew, even before the beginning of time, all the things that would happen among the coming generations. To the elect are given mansions in heaven. God is about ready to send his Messiah to earth to execute judgment and to make a new abode for the righteous where they shall dwell in peace and security. In the meantime the righteous people upon earth are persecuted, many of them being put to death. They cry to heaven for vengeance and their prayers are answered. With the advent of the Messiah a resurrection of all the righteous who have died will take place. Together with the saints who are living when the Messiah appears they are given a complete vindication and permitted to enjoy the blessings of the new age. The hosts of the wicked then make a final stand before the Messiah and all who are associated with Him. They march in military array upon the Holy City, but before they are able to launch their attack they are thrown into confusion. Many of them are seized by a mania for destruction and in the end they are all completely destroyed.[25]

The third section of the book is concerned chiefly with a discussion of problems that belong to the field of astronomy. It illustrates the fact that, among the Jews who lived at the time when this apocalypse was written, the belief prevailed that knowledge about all sorts of physical phenomena could be obtained by means of supernatural revelation. The topics discussed in this section include the position and function of the sun, the movements of the moon, the various phases of the moon, the lunar

[23] En. 27:1-5.
[24] En. 38:2.
[25] En. 38:5-6.

year, winds, the perversion of nature that was due to the sin of man, and the four intercalary days.

The fourth section opens with an account of two important dream-visions in which there is revealed the history of the world from the time of the flood to the setting up of the messianic kingdom. The vision contains a fairly accurate account of the highlights of Hebrew history down to the time when the author lived, about 150 B.C. From this point on the predictions have to do with the final assault of the wicked upon the righteous, the appearance of the Messiah, the resurrection of the dead, the establishment of a new and greater city of Jerusalem in which the righteous will dwell, and finally the everlasting punishment of the wicked.

The fifth and last section of the book contains the famous Apocalypse of Weeks.[26] This is a vision of the ten world-weeks which cover the whole course of history from creation to the setting up of the new heaven and the new earth. The first world-week extends from Adam to Enoch; the second from Enoch to Noah; the third from Noah to Abraham; the fourth from Abraham to Moses; the fifth from Moses to the building of the first temple; the sixth from the first temple to the Babylonian captivity; the seventh reaches to the time when the Apocalypse of Weeks is written; the eighth lasts until the establishment of the messianic kingdom; the ninth and tenth weeks terminate with the final judgment and the disappearance of the first heaven and earth.

The Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs is another Jewish document written shortly before the close of the second century B.C. The book contains evidence of the work of at least two different authors who represent the points of view of the Sadducee and the Pharisee parties.[27] The first of these writes at a time when the glory and prestige of the Maccabean party was at its greatest height. In the person of John Hyrcanus the author finds the ideas of prophet, king, priest, and Messiah all combined in one individual. He believes that the messianic age has already begun. He looks forward to the gradual conversion of the Gentiles. In due time the evil one, Belair, will be overthrown, sin will disappear from the earth, and the righteous will be raised from the dead. The second writer is critical of the Maccabean priest-kings. He believes that because of the nation's sin his people will have to go again into captivity. Finally, God will restore them and send a Messiah who will come from the line of Judah.

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[26] En. 35-90.

[27] The major difference between these two parties is to be found in their attitudes toward the culture of foreign nations. The Pharisee party held to the conservative point of view which saw little if any good to be derived from contact with persons whose cultural traditions differed from their own. The Sadducee was in this respect a liberal for he did not believe the Jewish people had a monopoly on things worthwhile.

A particular testament is attributed to each of the twelve sons of Jacob. They consist for the most part in a series of instructions given by these patriarchs to their descendants shortly before they died. Their apocalyptic character is revealed in the predictions which are made, not only with reference to the future of each tribe but the final triumph of the people of Israel in the kingdom of God.

One of the major characteristics of these testaments is to be found in the wealth of ethical instruction which they contain. In the testament of Reuben particular emphasis is given to the sin of fornication. Just before the patriarch dies he calls his children and their families to his bedside. After discoursing at length upon the subject of the weaknesses of the flesh he exhorts all of them to live in accordance with the principles of sexual purity.[28] In another testament Simeon speaks to his sons when he is one hundred and twenty years old. He warns them against the sin of jealousy reminding them that it was this sin that was responsible for the selling of Joseph. He urges them also to beware of envy and deceit, telling them "When envy goes a man's mind is lightened so that he can enjoy the well-being of his former rival." [29] The evil character of lying and anger is stressed in the testament of Dan while the testament of Gad contains instruction that has to do with the inner motives, "Love ye one another from the heart; and if a man sin against thee, speak peaceable to him, and in thy soul hold no guile; and if he repent and confess, forgive him . . . and if he be shameless and persist in his wrongdoing, even so forgive him from the heart, and leave to God the avenging." [30] Sexual purity is stressed again in the testaments of Issachar and of Joseph. In the latter of these two an elaborate account is given of the way in which Joseph resisted the temptations which came to him shortly after his arrival in Egypt. Warnings against fornication are given in the testament of Judah, "Even though a man be a king and commit fornication, he is stripped of his kingship by becoming a slave of fornication." [31] Love of money is also declared to be particularly dangerous inasmuch as it is likely to lead one into idolatry. Hope for the future is emphasized in this testament. After discoursing at some length on the tribulations that will come to the children of Judah, the author assures his readers, "After these things shall a star arise to you from Jacob in peace." [32] A setting aside of the old priesthood and the raising up of a new one is another prediction which belongs to the testament of Levi.

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[28] Test. of Reuben 2-6.
[29] Test. of Simeon 3:5-6.

Additions to the original work were probably made by both Jewish and Christian writers. One of these additions which now belongs to the testament of Dan is said to be the most ancient authority for the view connecting Dan with the *anti-Christ*. This belief is no doubt responsible for the fact that in the Book of Revelation the tribe of Dan is omitted from the list of those who will inherit the new abode of the righteous.

In the Sibylline Oracles we have an example of the tendency, common among primitive peoples, to attribute supernatural authority to the utterances of certain peculiar old women. The story of the witch of Endor recorded in I Samuel is illustrative of this trend among the early Hebrews.[33] In the late Jewish and early Christian times this device was often used as a means of propagating particular doctrines. People could gain a certain prestige for the peculiar tenets of their faith by associating them with the utterance of ancient prophetesses known as Sibyls. The oracles of this order which belong to the Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament constitute a collection of these so-called revelations rewritten and edited by Jewish or early Christian writers between the years 160 B.C. and the close of the third century A.D.

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[30] Test. of Gad 6:3, 7.
[31] Test. of Judah 15:2.
[32] Test. of Judah 24:1.
[33] I Sam. 28:6-31.

One of the main purposes of these oracles is to preserve the idea of unity and complete sovereignty of God. He is declared to be the creator and sustainer of all things. He not only sends the rain and all the blessings that come with it, but he also manifests his wrath by sending earthquakes, hailstorms, and other disturbances in the order of nature. Much of the material contained in these oracles has to do with the subject of the approaching judgment upon the wicked. This judgment will be preceded by a series of strange events which may be interpreted as omens that the day of judgment is near at hand. The sun, moon, and stars will fail to give light and thus the whole earth will be enshrouded in darkness. There will be great distress among the nations of the earth. At a critical moment, Nero Caesar, who has been dead for a time, will return to earth.[34] The world will fall under the dominion of an evil woman. A swift comet will herald the approach of the end. A great battle will be waged among the clouds after which the Messiah will come from heaven. The wicked will be punished and finally God will appear upon the clouds of heaven in power and great glory.

The Assumption of Moses is another apocalyptic work which purports to be an address that Moses delivered to his successor Joshua. The book was probably written sometime before the close of the year 70 A.D. It reflects many of the popular beliefs held at this time about the future of the Hebrew nation. The author was a member of the Pharisee party who looked with disfavor upon the growing secularization that was the result of a fusion of political ideals with popular messianic hopes. He did not accept the liberal attitude of the typical Sadducee about the value of non-Jewish culture. Neither did he believe in the program of violence by which the Zealots hoped to usher in the new kingdom. On the contrary, he based his hopes on a strong belief in the idea of a personal intervention on the part of God in behalf of his chosen people. Unlike the Essenes of New Testament times, he had a strong national interest. In the vision which Moses experienced shortly before his death, the whole course of Hebrew history was revealed in advance. He saw all of the major crises that were to arise in the life of the nation. Most important of all, he saw the return of the ten lost tribes, their reunion with the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, the reestablishment of a theocratic kingdom, and the final triumph of Israel over her foes. The author was convinced that the election of the Hebrew nation to its favored position upon the earth was not due to any righteousness which the people possessed in themselves. It was due rather to the grace of God. This was true with reference to the individual and the nation alike. He believed in the coming of a messianic kingdom but this did not involve, in his opinion, the work of an individual Messiah. Probably his omission of any reference to a Messiah was due to the fact that the Messiah was popularly conceived as a man of war. This seemed to him an unwarranted secularization of a spiritual ideal. The setting up of the messianic kingdom will occur just 1750 years after the death of Moses.[35] It will be preceded by a day of repentance on the part of Israel and the supernatural intervention of God on behalf of his people.

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[34] Sib. Or., Bk. iv., 119-24.

In the Secrets of Enoch, an apocalypse written by a Hellenistic Jew during the first century of the Christian era, we have the record of another vision which is both a history of the past and a prediction concerning the future. Through the experience of a dream-vision Enoch is permitted to ascend through a series of heavens. In the tenth heaven he is led by the archangel Michael into the presence of God. He learns about the creation and later passes on to his sons the instruction he has received. We are told that God created the world out of nothing. A full account is given of what was accomplished on each of the days of the creation week. At the end of his creative work God rested on the seventh day thereby bringing into existence the institution of the Sabbath. The souls of men were created before the foundation of the world, and it was then determined where the permanent abode of these souls would be. The created world will endure for a period of six thousand years.[36] At the end of this time a great catastrophic event will take place and the earth will remain desolate for one thousand years. When this period has expired time will be no more.

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[35] Asmp. M. 10:11-12 (250 year-weeks is equivalent to 1750 years).

A considerable amount of ethical instruction is included in this apocalypse. The author tells us that man was created with free will and hence he is responsible for his actions. At the beginning he was instructed in two ways, the way of Light and the way of Darkness. It was possible for him to choose the course he would follow. However the fact that his soul was incorporated in a body gave him a certain predisposition toward evil. The ethical duties of man include the principles of justice and charity. Swearing is regarded as an evil and people are urged to shun pride which is one of the besetting sins that often lead men astray. A high value is placed upon those who have learned to fear the Lord.

II Baruch has been called the "last noble utterance of Judaism before the destruction of Jerusalem."[37] It was written in Hebrew during the second half of the first century A.D. The original version has been lost but translations in the Greek and the Syriac have survived. It was probably the work of a group of writers rather than the product of a single author. It is representative of late legalistic Judaism although the work as a whole is attributed to Baruch, the companion and associate of the prophet Jeremiah.

The theology of the book is typical of the legalist's point of view. Sin is defined as the conscious and deliberate breaking of the law. Man is responsible for his sin inasmuch as he was created with free will. Although sin began with Adam and certain consequences such as physical death and psychical declension have followed, yet, in the main, the spiritual consequences of this sin were limited to Adam himself. Human nature did not become depraved through Adam's sin. Every man still retains the power of choice and his moral nature remains unimpaired.

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[36] Sec. of En. 32:1-2; 33:1-2.

[37] See R. H. Charles, *op. cit.*, pp. 470-78.

Righteousness consists in strict obedience to the law of God and it is by virtue of this obedience that man can be saved.

According to this document, the messianic kingdom will not last forever. It belongs, like this present world, to the sphere of corruption and for this reason it can have only a temporary duration. Nevertheless, it will be a golden age, and it will serve as a kind of connecting link between the world of corruption and the world of incorruption. With reference to the resurrection, the view is presented that the actual bodies of those who have died will be raised to life. This will make possible the physical recognition of these individuals. However, their bodies will soon be changed into spiritual existence and in this nonmaterial form they will endure throughout eternity.

In the Greek version of this apocalypse, God reveals to Baruch the coming of the destruction of Jerusalem. Baruch laments the fall of the city and God reveals to him the judgment that will finally be pronounced upon the wicked. In one of his prayers, Baruch bitterly condemns this life, urging that it is only a weariness to the righteous. God replies to his prayer telling him to wait for the final consummation.

III Baruch is a later document written by a Jewish Gnostic of the second century A.D. It claims to be a revelation made to Baruch at the time of the Babylonian captivity. Baruch ascends through the seven heavens. In the third heaven he sees the Dragon who consumes sinners. In the fifth heaven he converses with Michael, the archangel. Particular emphasis is given to the work of angels. They are messengers from God to man and it is one of their functions to intercede at appropriate times on behalf of different classes of men. The fall of man is described in connection with the story of the forbidden tree which was in reality a vine that had been planted by the angel Sammael.[38] The Devil tempted Adam but it is not true that an evil nature was inherited by his descendants. Each individual has an Adam within his own soul and experiences temptations similar to the one which came to the parents of the human race.

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[38] III Bar. 4:8.

The Fourth Book of Ezra written during the early part of the second century A.D. contains a record of seven visions which were given to Ezra during the closing years of the Babylonian exile. In the first of these Ezra prays to know why the people of Israel should be languishing in exile. God replies by sending his angel who assures the petitioner that God's love has not been withdrawn from his people although his designs are too comprehensive to be understood by all. Deliverance will come. In the second and third visions new assurances are given that this evil age will be brought to a close. When wickedness has reached its greatest height, the New Jerusalem will be revealed. Here the righteous children of Israel will dwell in bliss with the Messiah for a period of 400 years.[39] At the end of this time all will die, including the Messiah. Then follows a new creation accompanied by a resurrection from the dead. Finally the righteous are given their reward in Paradise and the wicked are punished in Gehenna. Later visions have to do with the glories of the heavenly Jerusalem, the downfall of Rome, the appearance of the Messiah, and Ezra's own translation to the heavenly city. The world has passed through nine and one-half of the twelve periods that are alloted for its complete existence.

Psalms and Wisdom Literature

The Psalms of Solomon is a collection of eighteen psalms similar in character to the older ones that are preserved in the canonical Book of Psalms. They were written during the first century B.C. and represent the Pharisaic conception of righteousness. It may be that their reference to sinners was intended as an attack upon the beliefs and practices of the Sadducee party. The authors have a firm belief in the resurrection. They are indifferent to the political movements of their time except that they are opposed to the idea of a worldly non-Davidic monarchy. They are looking for the fulfilment of the divine promise concerning the coming of a Messiah who will base His rule not on material resources but upon the power of God.

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[39] IV Ezra 7:28-29.

The standard of righteousness set forth in these psalms is obedience to the perfect law of God. Judged by this standard the people of Israel fall far short. However they are much better than the people of the surrounding nations. Within Israel one can distinguish two groups, those who are pious and who fear the Lord, and the ones who because of their material prosperity have become insolent, self-reliant, and hypocritical. Naturally the writers belong to the first of these two classes. Elements of righteousness include abstention from sexual impurity and a deep anxiety with reference to the sins that are committed in ignorance.

The Fourth Book of Maccabees is a treatise on the subject of ethics. It is a discourse on the "Power of the Inspired Reason to control the Passions." It was written during the latter part of the first century B.C. It describes at length, and in some instances in a manner that is painful to read, the horrible atrocities that were inflicted upon the Jews during the reign of the Syrian tyrant, Antiochus. A Hebrew mother is compelled to witness the putting to death of seven of her sons in a most cruel and torturous manner. She is given a chance in each instance to save the son's life by persuading him to deny the faith. This she refuses to do, but instead she urges them to denounce the king for what he is doing and to join the ranks of the noble martyrs who have sealed their faith, and their loyalty to God with their own blood.

Although the author of the treatise was an orthodox Jew, he made use of the virtues of Stoicism in his support of orthodoxy. He accepts the Stoic principle that to offend in one point is to be guilty of all. But, unlike the Stoics, he believes that the passions have been implanted by God in order that they may be controlled by man. The virtues of temperance, courage, wisdom, and justice have been achieved best by the great men of the Hebrew race. The power or reason to control the passions is best illustrated, he believes, in the experiences of Jacob, Joseph, Moses, and David. The purpose of this treatise or sermon seems to have been the inspiring of faith and courage in the hearts of those who are being persecuted for their faith. The martyrs are the great heroes of the race. God will reward them with immortality.

The Story of Ahikar belongs to the folklore of the ancient Hebrews. Inasmuch as the Greek philosopher, Democritus, quotes from the proverbs of Ahikar, the story must have been in existence as early as the fourth or fifth century B.C. It is a tale of ingratitude and its just punishment.

Ahikar, the hero of the story, was grand vizier to Sennacherib, the king of Assyria. He was a wise and honorable politician who had accumulated considerable wealth but had never been blessed with children. After many prayers concerning the matter, he decided to take his sister's son, Nadon, as his own. The adoption turned out very badly for in spite of the training in proverbial wisdom which Ahikar was careful to give his adopted son, Nadon plotted against his benefactor and by means of forged documents betrayed him into the hands of government officials. Ahikar is condemned to death and Nadon plans to step into his place. On the way to his execution Ahikar reminds the swordsman of a similar situation in which he had been instrumental in saving the swordsman's life. The result was that a criminal was secretly substituted and he died in place of Ahikar who was now hidden away in his own cellar. Some time later, Sennacherib, unable to meet the intrigues of the king of Egypt, expressed his wish that Ahikar were alive in order that he might counsel with him. He is then informed that Ahikar is still living and he restores him to his former position. Ahikar performs his duties at the court and then takes full revenge upon Nadon. He puts him in prison, beats and starves him, and all the while he keeps exhorting and reproving him for the things he has done.

Chapter 21

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The greatness of the Old Testament is not confined to any one of its many aspects. Nevertheless, from the philosophical point of view it remains true that the chief significance of the book is to be found in the ideas which it contains. These ideas lead us to speak of this collection of writings as a book of philosophy. Any interpretation of events which attempts to set forth the meaning of human life and its relation to the world process is something that belongs to the field of philosophy and in this respect the literature of the Old Testament ought not to be neglected.

Our brief survey of the writings included in this book has brought to light a wealth of different views about the nature and destiny of human beings. These views are, as a rule, closely associated with specific beliefs about the deity or being whom the authors of the Old Testament regarded as the supreme power in the universe. These different ideas were produced over a period of time, and are often inconsistent, even in direct conflict with other ideas which form a part of the same literature.

Because of conflicting ideas it is a mistake for one to speak about *the* biblical view with reference to any one of the great themes having to do with the meaning of human existence. This is especially true if the use of the term is meant to imply there is any single view which is accepted by all writers on the subject. The facts indicate very clearly that each author expressed only what he understood to be the truth about Yahweh and his relationship to human beings. No one of these authors ever understood this theme perfectly. Each one had his own peculiar limitations and it is for this reason that we find so many divergencies in the views that have been expressed. A recognition of this fact does not discredit the literature in the least. Actually it does just the opposite. The variety of ideas which one finds around such themes as the nature of the deity, the character of goodness, the meaning of history, or the means of achieving salvation is evidence of both the originality and sincerity of the different writers, and of the vitality of the themes. No two persons ever think exactly alike if they are working independently of one another. Especially is this true when the area in which they are working is one that has to do with the moral and religious issues of human experience.

This position as it applies to the teachings of the Old Testament is not to be interpreted as a denial of divine inspiration nor is it meant to imply that a knowledge of the physical and social environment in which the ancient Hebrews lived is, by itself, a sufficient explanation for all of the ideas which they held. It is quite possible that what one believes to be true has been derived from more than one source. Some of it may have come to his mind directly from a supreme or divine being and at the same time other elements may have been supplied from his own experience. That one's views on any given subject are not perfect in every respect is no reason for saying that no part of them came from God. Divine inspiration does not imply infallibility on the part of the one who receives it and who attempts to communicate its meaning to others. The doctrine of an infallible book is based on the idea that human understanding of truth is perfect, no less than the source from which it has been derived. It is this assumption which is here called in question.

One other point needs to be mentioned in connection with the philosophical treatment of Old Testament ideas. It has to do with the validity of human reason as an instrument for criticizing biblical views. Philosophy, as we all know, relies upon reasonableness as a criterion of truth. Beliefs about God, man, human destiny, or the nature of the universe are subjected to careful analyses and any one of them is rejected whenever it can be shown that the belief is either self-contradictory or out of harmony with relevant facts. Reason used in this manner is a negative guide toward truth. The philosopher proceeds through the elimination of erroneous ideas toward an interpretation which will more nearly approximate the ideal of complete consistency or reasonableness. Although he does not expect that it will ever be possible to reach perfection he does believe the procedure he follows will bring him nearer to that goal. Is this method an appropriate one for dealing with the ideas that are expressed in the literature of the Old Testament?

This question raises an important issue about the nature of reason and revelation and the way in which these two processes are related in those writings which form a part of the Bible. For example, there are many persons who hold the view that human reason is not a reliable instrument for acquiring knowledge about God or any of the major problems having to do with the value or destiny of human beings.[1] Its usefulness, they tell us, is limited to a descriptive account of the world of our experiences and beyond this sphere it can tell us nothing. Any attempt on the part of reason to transcend the world of experience and tell us something about God or the nature of the universe as a whole is but an expression of human pride which is bound to lead one astray. Knowledge in these areas is important for human beings but it can be obtained only by revelation and this is not a rational process. Revealed truths are made known to individuals by means of an immediate awareness which is usually accompanied by a feeling of certainty. The acceptance as unquestionable truths, of the ideas which are obtained in this manner, is always a matter of faith, since reason is not regarded as a competent means for determining whether they are true or false.

If the position which has just been described could be accepted as a reliable one, the Old Testament could not be regarded as a book of philosophy. Neither would it be appropriate to employ philosophical methods in the study of its contents. One would need to think of it as a collection of revealed truths. The study of these writings would indeed be commendable as a means of gaining familiarity with the content of these particular revelations, but it would not be proper to call in question any of the ideas that are presented in them or to attempt an evaluation of the work of any one of the different authors. Why is this view an untenable one? What are the chief objections to it and why has it been rejected throughout the entire course of this study?

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[1] This is especially true of the Neo-Orthodox School. One finds this point of view represented in the writings of Kierkegaard and such contemporary interpreters as Niebuhr, Tillich, and Brunner.

The answer to these questions lies in an analysis of the assumptions on which this conception of revelation is based.[2] One of these is the implied assertion that an inner feeling of certainty is a more reliable criterion of truth than can be established by means of rational processes. There is no evidence to support this position and there are many facts which indicate that it is not true. Granted that human reason is not an infallible instrument for arriving at truth, what right have we to assume that one's feelings possess this quality? Are not feelings subject to error just as much as the reasoning processes? We know of many instances where a feeling of certainty has accompanied false beliefs.

Another assumption which cannot be regarded as true is that it is possible for one to choose between the Word of God and human opinions. If one could do this the whole matter would be settled. The Word of God would always take precedence over any contrary position. The difficulty lies in one's ability to know what the Word of God is. The individual can accept only that which he believes to be the Word of God. What is really involved is not a choice between divine truth and human opinions but rather a choice between two human opinions. If human judgments are unreliable in the interpretation of matters pertaining to God, how can they be used to determine what writings are to be accepted in the first place? We have no escape from dependence on our own human judgments. They are necessarily used even by those who deny their validity. In view of this, the only thing that remains for us to do is to follow the best human light that we have and this includes the use of our rational faculties. Although we recognize that human reason has its limitations, it must be admitted that its pronouncements have a degree of stability that is not possessed by the feelings or the senses. It may be necessary to supplement the work of reason by taking into account other factors and needs which should be satisfied. It remains true, nevertheless, that the test of rationality is something that cannot be ignored by those who are seeking truth in any realm. Herein lies the justification for attempting to deal philosophically with the ideas of the Old Testament. It will be our purpose, in this final chapter, to summarize briefly the more important contributions toward an adequate understanding of the moral and religious meaning of life and the world as these ideas have come to light in this very significant collection of writings.

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[2] See L. Harold DeWolf, *The Religious Revolt Against Reason* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1949).

The Idea of God

Of all the ideas expressed in the literature of the Old Testament the conception of God is the most important. Actually it is the notion of God's relationship to man as a part of the world process which provides the unifying theme of the entire book. Whether God is referred to as Yahweh, Elohim, El Shaddai, Adonai or some other name, he is the one who more than any other factor determines the course of events, and it is his nature whom the various authors attempt to reveal. It would not be correct to say that God is the central theme in all Old Testament writings for his name is not even mentioned in Esther, and in Ecclesiastes he appears to have little if anything to do with the running of the universe and he certainly does not interfere in the affairs of men. But with the exception of these two small books it is true that the conception of God plays a most important role. It is only in relationship to their understanding of the deity that the work of any of the different groups of Old Testament writers can be made intelligible.

The prophets, for example, were known by their contemporaries as spokesmen for Yahweh. It was their chief function to proclaim the message which he alone had given to them. The lawgivers who formulated the particular codes of law by which the people were to be governed were conscious of deity, for it was God's requirements which they tried to embody in the specific rules and regulations that they gave to their people. Historians saw in the march of events a fulfilment of the divine purpose and they believed it was the attitude of people toward the laws of God that would finally determine their destiny. The priests were a group who ministered before God on behalf of their people. They emphasized both moral and ritualistic requirements for, as they saw it, obedience to Yahweh's commands should take precedence over everything else. The sages wrote about wisdom as something that belongs to God. They called upon men and women to live virtuous lives in order that they might receive divine favors. The psalmists wrote hymns of praise to God in recognition of all the miraculous things he had done. The Apocalyptists were aware of an intense struggle between the forces of good and of evil, but even in the darkest hours of their nation's history they were confident that God's purpose would never be overthrown. Because of their faith in God they could proclaim their belief in the ultimate triumph of his cause and the establishment of righteousness on earth.

The conceptions of God found in various parts of the Old Testament are not all alike. Each writer was necessarily limited by his own understanding of the deity and in each instance this was determined in part by the peculiar experiences which had come to him. In general, it is possible to trace the steps which led to the more advanced conceptions of God, but progress along these lines did not occur at regular intervals nor is it always true that the later conceptions are more adequate than the earlier ones. As far back as the times of Moses the Hebrews spoke of Yahweh as a god who was associated in a peculiar manner with the people of Israel. If, as the evidence would seem to indicate, Yahweh had originally been recognized as the god of the Kenites the earliest Hebrew conceptions of his nature were derived largely from this source. After Yahweh became known as the god of the Hebrews, their understanding of him changed from time to time. This was the result of new experiences which came to individuals and to the nation as a whole. The most significant changes in the Hebrew conception of the deity were introduced by the prophets. Under their leadership and guidance the idea of Yahweh was transformed into that of a universal god who presided over the destinies of all nations and whose chief concern for his people was the establishment of a just and righteous social order upon the earth.

Instead of outward conformity to external laws he desired a change in the hearts and minds of men so that their actions would spring from pure and noble motives.[3] The bitter persecutions which the Hebrew people were forced to endure and the hardships which came to them during the Exilic and post-Exilic periods were also responsible in part for still further changes in their conception of deity. At least in the minds of some of the people Yahweh came to be thought of as a god who not only loves his people but who suffers with them and for them. The fact that comparatively innocent persons are often forced to suffer more than those who are guilty of glaring misdeeds caused some thinkers to question the power of Yahweh to control completely the forces of evil. In general, however, the idea prevailed that, in the end, Yahweh's purposes would be realized through the destruction of all evil powers and the establishment of a just and righteous social order that would endure forever.

The many different conceptions of Yahweh found in various parts of the Old Testament make it impossible to characterize any one of them as *the* biblical idea of God. It is quite possible as the author of Malachi states[4] that Yahweh does not change but it is certainly true that human understanding of him has always changed whenever people have thought seriously concerning his nature. No better illustration of these changing conceptions can be found than that which appears in the Old Testament itself. About the only common element in these many conceptions of deity is the belief in the existence of some kind of superhuman power which is capable of knowing intimately the affairs of human beings and of exercising some control over their actions and their respective environments. This power always possessed some elements of a personal nature and it was never conceived as identical with the material world or any particular part of it. The Hebrew writers were not pantheists. Neither did they believe that the physical world is sufficient in itself to account for the events that take place. Yahweh was for them the most important of all realities but with reference to the qualities that he possessed such as his power, his goodness, the requirements which he makes of human beings, and the purposes he hopes to realize, their ideas of him were as varied as the individuals whose writings about him have been preserved.

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[3] This point of view is expressed in Jer. 31:33 and in Ezek. 36:25-26.

[4] Mal. 3:6.

In spite of these many differences and the fact that the idea of God was never a completely static one, it is possible to describe in a general way the conception of Yahweh that gained the widest acceptance among the later generations of Hebrew people and which in turn exercised the greatest influence upon the development of both Judaism and Christianity. It is in this sense only that we may speak of the Old Testament conception of God and even here we must bear in mind that the view which is presented does not coincide exactly with the thinking of any particular writer.

If we wish to characterize this conception of deity, the first point to be noted is that the Hebrew idea of God was always personal. There is nothing in the Old Testament writings to remind one of Greek Atomism or the later doctrine known as Stoicism. The Hebrew God was never conceived as an impersonal force of nature. Neither did they believe in a deterministic conception of the universe. Yahweh was a being who knew and who cared about the lives of human beings. It is true that in the earlier conceptions of his nature his personality was associated with a physical body and his interests were bound up very largely with the successful conquests of the Hebrews over the surrounding nations. Not only did he show partiality toward his own people but even among them he did not have the same regard for women and slaves as for others. But these limitations were well overcome in the minds of later writers. When we come to the Book of Jonah, the prophecies of Deutero-Isaiah, and portions of the Book of Psalms we find him presented as a purely spiritual being who is deeply concerned with the welfare of all people and nations of the earth. He is no longer conceived as one among many gods but he is the one supreme being, the God of the whole earth. His personal characteristics such as willing and knowing still remain. This makes it possible for human beings to communicate with him and thereby receive strength and guidance for meeting the problems of life.

Yahweh was not only a personal being but a powerful one as well. As long as he was considered a tribal or national deity his power was limited by the forces of enemy countries. In the days of the early conquest of Canaan there were times when he could not bring victory to the Hebrews because the Canaanites had chariots of iron.[5] Later when he was regarded as a universal deity his power was increased accordingly. With the coming of the great prophets, especially those of the seventh century and later, Yahweh was conceived to be the one supreme power in all the universe. He was declared to be the creator of the heavens and the earth.[6] He had control over the forces of nature and could alter any of them at his will. He was able to see the end from the beginning and no rival power existed that was strong enough to defeat the final accomplishment of his purposes. Evil forces might, indeed, achieve temporary victories, but in the end they were destined to be overthrown.

Although the notion of Yahweh's power was recognized from the earliest times when he was worshiped by the Hebrew people, later generations came to place an equal amount of emphasis on the idea of his goodness. During the era of the great prophets Yahweh was known as a god of justice. He possessed a righteous character and he demanded nothing less than justice on the part of his people. To be sure the full meaning of the terms "justice" and "righteousness" was never completely grasped by any one of the Old Testament writers. For that matter no one else has ever been able to state the full meaning of justice encompassing all concrete situations that arise. But so far as the Hebrew writers did understand the meaning of goodness, it was considered by them to be an essential attribute of the deity. Whenever Yahweh promised to do something for them they could depend upon his word. Even though everything else might fail his word would stand fast forever.[7] Because he was a just being he could never tolerate human conduct that was deceitful or unjust. He would see to it that exploitation and unfair practices of all kinds were punished. Nations no less than individuals would have to suffer for their misdeeds. And yet with this sense of justice, Yahweh was also a kind and merciful being. His punishments were something more than an effort on his part to meet the demands of justice. They were also designed to bring about reform on the part of those who were being punished. It is true that the concepts of justice and mercy on the part of the deity cannot be made to harmonize completely with one another but apparently this fact did not bother the Hebrew writers in the least. They knew that Yahweh was in many respects a mysterious being and the fact that justice and mercy are incompatible from the human point of view did not mean that they were irreconcilable on the part of a divine being. During the earlier periods of their history it was believed that Yahweh's kindness and mercy were extended toward the Hebrews, but it was only justice that determined his attitude toward the foreign nations. But the inconsistencies of this position became apparent to the authors of such Books as Jonah and Deutero-Isaiah. To them Yahweh's mercy was extended to all peoples and nations of the earth.

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[5] Judg. 1:19.
[6] Isa. 40:28.
[7] Isa. 40:8.

So long as the Hebrews believed that Yahweh was both all-powerful and good they were bound to be faced with another problem which in some respects they were never able to solve. This was the problem of evil as it comes to light in the suffering of comparatively innocent persons. Many of the Old Testament writers did not recognize the existence of this problem for in their opinion only those who were guilty of misdeeds ever had to suffer. Hence, suffering whenever it occurred could always be interpreted as a just punishment for wrong doing. Usually it was the individual who suffered because of his own sins although most of the pre-Exilic writers took the position that one or a whole group of persons might be punished because of the sins of others. After a time the conception of a just God made it necessary to rule out the idea of one person being made to suffer for the misdeeds of another. Both Jeremiah and Ezekiel taught that Yahweh would not punish one person for the sins of another. However, the fact remained that, so far as human beings could determine, it was not always the wicked person who suffered most nor was it the righteous persons who always escaped the hardships and misfortunes which fell upon people in general. The prophet Habakkuk saw this problem but it is only in the Book of Job that any author really comes to a full understanding of the implications that are involved in it. Here we find a courageous thinker who was bold enough to challenge the time-honored doctrine that people suffer only because of their sins. Although he never finds an adequate solution to the problem, he does make it clear that the generally accepted view is not in accordance with the facts.

The Nature of Man

The conception of man which one finds in the different parts of the Old Testament is not as varied as the idea of God. Yet it would be a mistake to suppose there is just one view which was recognized by each writer. The notion, for example, of the dignity and worth of the individual by virtue of the fact that he is a human being, was something that gained recognition very slowly. Its full meaning was never accepted by more than a small minority of the Hebrew people and there were some writers of influence who regarded the wholesale destruction of foreign nations as a matter of small consequence. However, when we consider the literature of the Old Testament as a whole we find there gradually emerged a conception of human nature which is not only unique but probably the most significant that the world has ever known. Certainly it deserves an important place among the Hebrew contributions to philosophic thought.

Man, according to the Hebrew tradition, possessed a twofold nature. In the first place he was a physical creature. In common with the animals and other creatures whom Yahweh had made, he possessed a physical body and was subject to the many limitations which were made necessary by that fact. His life was bound to be governed to a very large extent by the desires and needs of his physical body. But man was also something more than a physical organism. The second important thing about him was the idea that he was made in the image of God. This meant, among other things, that he had the ability to think and to will. This made it possible for his actions to be governed by what he knew as well as by his feelings and physical desires. Furthermore, according to Old Testament teaching, man is so constituted that he can sit in judgment on his own activities and thereby recognize a difference between his actual achievements and the ideal toward which he has been striving. This ability to become dissatisfied with himself and his present attainments is in many respects the most important thing about the Old Testament conception of man. It illustrates the way in which man as a physical creature is able to transcend his finite existence and judge himself in the light of an ideal that is beyond any actual attainment. Whatever moral and spiritual progress he might make would, of course, be due in no small measure to the presence of this factor within his own nature.

To appreciate the significance of the Hebrew conception of man it is necessary to bear in mind certain points of contrast between this view and the more popular ones which have occupied so large a place in the philosophical literature of the Western world.[8] Take, for example, the classical conception of human nature which one finds in the writings of the Greek philosophers. According to Plato, Aristotle, the Stoics, and other contemporary thinkers, man was regarded as essentially a rational being. It is true they recognized in him a combination of matter and spirit but it was in man's spiritual nature that they found his true selfhood. The body was in their opinion a source of evil since it served as a hindrance to the proper functioning of his mental faculties. They identified reasonableness with goodness. They claimed that ignorance alone was responsible for the evil that men do. Because man was a rational being it followed that his nature was good. Whenever he realized his true self through the proper exercise of his rational powers he achieved what they regarded as the good life.

The Hebrew conception differed widely from this position. Although they recognized the existence of a rational element in human nature, they knew that man was just as much a physical creature as he was a spiritual being. His mind could not be identified with his essential nature any more than his body. Neither was it possible to regard man's rational nature as something that is necessarily good. As the Hebrews saw it, the rational element in man is capable of becoming just as corrupt as anything which belongs to the physical side of his existence. They did believe that an evil tendency was present in all human beings. This idea was expressed in their teaching about the fall of man from an original state of innocence. This fall was interpreted by them to include the mind as well as the body. There is nothing in the Old Testament to suggest that the mind is always good or that the body is always evil. Both mind and body are capable of serving good ends and either one may also be used in the service of evil purposes. From the Hebrew point of view man was not of necessity a good being because he had the power to think, nor was he bound to be evil just because he had a physical body. The source of evil was not to be found in ignorance. On the contrary it was a matter of the will.

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[8] See Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man,* Vol. I (New York: Chas. Scribner's Sons, 1943).

The Old Testament conception of human nature is no less at variance with modern views of man than it was opposed to what we have called the classical conception held by Greek philosophers. Modern thinkers have in many instances accepted a doctrine concerning the nature of man that is the very opposite of the one held by the ancient Greeks.[9] Believing that man's essential nature is exemplified in the behavior of his physical organism, they have arrived at the conclusion that there is nothing about it which may appropriately be called good. Their doctrine draws much of its support from the results of certain psychological investigations which indicate that all human activity springs from a selfish motive. Man, they tell us, is essentially a self-seeking animal. He is driven by a set of inner impulses and desires, each one of which is directed toward the securing of his own individual pleasure. His true self is not to be found in his rational nature. It lies rather in the multitude of appetites, feelings, prejudices, and desires which are always clamoring for fulfilment. When these impulses prompt one to do that which is contrary to the customs or established conventions of the society in which he lives, they must, of course, be inhibited. But they are not eliminated from the core or driving center of one's personality. They are merely channeled in a new direction. The individual then justifies his actions to his own mind and possibly to that of others. He does so through a process of rationalization which makes these actions appear to be quite different from what they really are. All so-called altruistic actions are, from this point of view, only disguised forms of one's selfish interests. Thus the nature of man is revealed as a thoroughly selfish creature and there is no escape from this type of motivation.

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[9] This point of view is illustrated in the writings of Thomas Hobbes, Karl Marx, and in contemporary Freudian psychology.

How does the Old Testament conception of human nature differ from the one that has just been described? Certainly the Hebrew writers were aware of the evil tendencies that are present in human nature. They saw the selfish motivation which lies behind approved activities just as clearly as any of our modern psychologists. But they differed from the modern point of view both in their analyses of the cause of these actions and in their conviction that a remedy for this situation is available to anyone who really wants it. The major cause of these selfish actions was to be found in the pride which exists in the human heart. Man is a finite creature but he doesn't want to admit his finitude even to himself. He wants to believe that he is equal to God. This pride prompts him to disobey divine commands and to try to escape the consequences of his disobedience. So long as man is proud and fully satisfied with himself there is no hope for his improvement. But an escape may be found through humility. Man may acknowledge his own weakness and plead for divine help. When he does this, God will intervene and change the impulses of his own nature so that he will want to do the things that he ought to do. This, in brief, is the meaning of Jeremiah's doctrine of the New Covenant.[10] While it is true that the majority of Old Testament writers did not see it as clearly as he did, there are many parts of the literature in which this account of human nature and the possibilities of its change are clearly implied.

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[10] Jer. 31:31-34.

The Meaning of Right and Wrong

The moral philosophy of the Old Testament may be characterized in a general way as being both formalistic and absolutistic. This means, in the first place, that the Hebrews were accustomed to think of goodness in terms of obedience to divine laws. Secondly, it means that the laws of Yahweh, once they had been delivered to the people, would stand fast forever. The nature of goodness, it was believed, was not something that changes from time to time. The notion that moral standards are merely the inventions of human beings or that goodness consists simply in following the customs and conventions of the society in which one lives, was as foreign to the spirit of the Old Testament as anything that can be imagined. The basis of morality, as they understood it, was not to be found in the wishes and desires of men but rather in the will of an eternal and unchanging God.

There is, however, a great deal more in the Old Testament conception of right and wrong than these few general statements would seem to imply. There is variety as well as uniformity in what the different writers had to say concerning the meaning of the good life. Although the men who wrote the various parts of the Old Testament may have been in complete agreement with one another in their conviction that morality is based on the idea of conformity to the will of God, there is considerable difference of opinion among them as to what the will of God is. We need not be surprised at this for it is quite obvious that what one thinks about the requirements of God is dependent on the conception of God which he has in mind. We have seen throughout the course of this study that the idea of God was constantly changing in the minds of people over the different periods of Hebrew history. This would of necessity bring about a change in their understanding of what God wanted them to do.

One should also bear in mind that while the idea of conformity to the requirements of an external law is in general the basis of Old Testament morality, it is by no means the only view that is presented in this literature. Jeremiah, for example, was as much opposed to the formalistic conception of goodness as one may find in the philosophic literature of any people. The same thing is true of certain parts of the Book of Psalms and again in some portions of Isaiah.[11] There are even some elements of hedonism, or the doctrine that finds goodness in the pursuit of one's pleasure in the Old Testament. To be sure the hedonistic view is foreign to the spirit of the book in general but one can find traces of it in Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and in certain portions of the Apocrypha. Altogether the Old Testament presents a rather wide variety in its conceptions of the meaning of right and wrong.

During the earlier periods of Hebrew history the dominant conception of right and wrong was based on the idea of a covenant relationship between Yahweh and his people. They had made a contract or agreement in accordance with which the people had promised to obey the statutes and laws which Yahweh had given to them. Obedience to these requirements was the only standard of goodness they knew. We have noted in previous chapters many of the specific laws included in the Book of the Covenant. In general these laws represent a fairly high conception of justice at least insofar as they had to do with the relationship of the Hebrew people to one another. It is true that this early code contained the famous law of revenge, and the treatment which it prescribed for women, slaves, and foreigners was on a lower plane than what we find in some of the later codes. But in spite of these limitations its recognition of the principles of honesty and fair play were remarkable for the age in which it appeared.

With the coming of the great prophets of the eighth century we find a notable improvement in men's understanding of what Yahweh's requirements are. Instead of religious observances such as sacrifices, feasts, and prayers, the emphasis is placed on moral requirements which are designed to promote the welfare of human beings.[12] In the Deuteronomic Code which followed this era an attempt was made to embody these moral principles in a specific set of rules by which the people were to be governed. Many new regulations were added in a vigorous attempt to correct the vicious and unfair practices that were current in the land. But with all of the new provisions that were included in this set of laws the formalistic conception of morality still prevailed. Strict obedience to all of these commands was the only thing which constituted a good life. To obey was good and to disobey was bad. There was no other standard of goodness.

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[11] Note especially Ps. 51 and Isa. 58.

The first great challenge to this conception of goodness was expressed by Jeremiah. His observation of conditions which prevailed in Judah, as well as his own private experiences, led to the conviction that evil deeds have their origin in the selfishness and greed which exist in human hearts. Unless these elements can be removed from the inner life of the individual, evil deeds will continue in spite of any outward conformity to external laws. The important thing is not simply the overt act but rather the motive behind the act. For this reason all social and legislative reforms are doomed to failure unless the desires of men can be changed so that they will want to do the things that they ought to do. Jeremiah believed that a change of this type was a genuine possibility for all those who really wanted it, even though it would require action on the part of God as well as humility and repentance on the part of the individual. Once this change in one's nature had taken place, good actions were bound to follow. There would no longer be any need for an external set of rules to be obeyed. The righteous person merely followed the dictates of his own heart. It is this conception of goodness which the author of Psalm 51 had in mind when he declared that the sacrifices acceptable to Yahweh are "a broken and contrite heart." [13]

Although this point of view represents the noblest conception of goodness to be found in the Old Testament, it was too lofty an ideal to be comprehended by the people in general. Apparently there were many persons, including some of the leaders of the Hebrew people, who were never able to rise above the notion that goodness is only a matter of obedience to a set of rules that has been laid down by an accepted authority. As a further incentive for people to live the good life the idea of obedience is frequently reinforced by an appeal to selfish interests. This takes the form of a promise of material rewards to those who obey the divine precepts while punishments of various sorts are said to be the lot of those who disobey. Some of the sages whose writings have been preserved in Proverbs and in Ecclesiasticus give particular emphasis to the idea that prosperity is a reward for righteous living and adversity is in store for those who are wicked.

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[12] Mic. 6:8.

[13] Ps. 51:17.

The Idea of Freedom

Although the Old Testament presents no arguments to support the doctrine known as freedom of the will, there can be no question about the belief in the power of human beings to make choices on the part of those who produced the writings. The belief in freedom, like the belief in God, was something which the Hebrews took for granted. They did not try to justify these beliefs by the use of arguments for it did not appear to them to be necessary to do so. There is nothing strange about this procedure for it must be recognized that assumptions of some kind are a necessary prerequisite for all thinking. Even the process of proving requires the assumption of some criterion of proof. The important thing is what shall be selected as one's starting-point. It is in this connection that we find an important point of contrast between the thinking of the Greeks and the Hebrews. The Greek philosophers, especially the early cosmologists, began their speculations with an analysis of the outside world as it appeared to them. Finding that the principles of mechanical necessity were adequate to account for the movements of material objects, they finally arrived at an interpretation of human nature that was patterned after the principles and ideas they had found useful in explaining the world of physical objects. This type of explanation led in many instances to a denial of any real freedom of choice on the part of human beings.[14] It was vice versa with the Hebrews. They used as their starting-point the world of their own inner experiences along with the moral and religious implications they found necessary in order to make these experiences meaningful and significant. Whatever ideas they may have held concerning the physical world were secondary in importance to those inner experiences of which they were immediately aware. The sense of freedom and its accompanying moral responsibility were, for them, matters of primary importance, and their beliefs about the physical world and God were made to conform with these initial experiences.

There is another respect, too, in which the Old Testament conception of freedom differs from the thinking of the Greek philosophers. It has to do with the particular faculty of the mind that is involved in the making of choices. For the Greeks human freedom was something that pertained primarily to the intellect. For the Hebrews it was essentially a matter of the will. The Greek point of view is well illustrated in Aristotle's teaching that the rational man alone is free. This meant that man's only freedom is the freedom to think or not to think. His overt actions are always the result of one or the other of these two alternatives. The Hebrew conception is shown in the story concerning the entrance of sin into the world.[15] Adam's transgression was not the result of ignorance on his part for, according to the story, he knew full well what he was doing. His sin was an act of will.

The contrast between these opposing views can be seen more clearly when we take into consideration the consequences of each one with reference to good and evil actions which may be performed. From the Greek point of view evil deeds were necessarily the result of ignorance. They taught that everyone acts in accordance with what he believes to be his own best interest. He may be mistaken about it and as a result do things that he ought not to do. If ignorance is the cause of evil, knowledge is the remedy whereby it may be overcome. The individual is free to think correctly and whenever he does this, good actions are bound to follow. It was for this reason that the Greeks believed education of the mind was an adequate instrument for eliminating all the major ills of human society. To a large extent the Western world has in modern times followed this doctrine of the Greeks.

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[14] This is especially true of Leucippus and Democritus.

[15] See Gen. 3.

This analysis of human freedom and the causes of sinful action is contrary both to the spirit and the content of the Old Testament. The Hebrew writers did not believe that ignorance is the only cause or even the major cause of evil. Neither did they accept the idea that knowledge is any sure way of producing right action. They were sure in their own minds that it is possible for one to make wrong choices even though he knows perfectly well what it is that he is doing. The condemnation of sin which is a prominent characteristic of many of the major portions of Old Testament literature is usually directed against individuals who are aware of the evil in which they are engaged. Adam knew that the fruit which he ate was forbidden fruit.[16] King Saul knew that Yahweh had told him to destroy the Amalekites including their king.[17] David knew that he was doing wrong when he took Bathsheba.[18] King Ahab knew he had no right to seize Naboth's vineyard.[19] The kings of Israel and Judah knew that foreign alliances were contrary to the will of Yahweh.[20] Similar instances could be cited from practically all Old Testament writings. It is true that ignorance of Yahweh and his requirements was regarded at times as contributing factors toward the sinfulness of the people. Both Hosea and Isaiah criticized their contemporaries for "lack of knowledge" but they would have agreed with other prophets in maintaining that greed and selfishness in human hearts is the major cause of evil actions.[21]

Responsibility for one's actions necessarily accompanies the power to make choices. This fact is recognized by all Old

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[16] Gen. 3:6.
[17] I Sam. 15:17-23.
[18] II Sam. 11.
[19] I Kings 21.
[20] Isa. 30:1-3.
[21] Hos. 4:6; Isa. 1:3.

Testament writers. Man is by nature so constituted that he is tempted to do evil but whether or not he yields to this temptation is, in every instance, the individual's own responsibility. No one can place the blame for his wrongdoing on the environment in which he lives. Neither can he maintain that the actions of his ancestors are the cause of the evil he has committed. As long as greed and selfishness are the dominant motives in one's life, evil actions will be the result no matter what changes are made in the political or social environment in which one lives. According to Jeremiah the ills of human society can be attributed to the fact that the heart of man is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked.[22] This is a condition which man cannot change by himself. "Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots?" Neither can people do good who are accustomed to do evil. But the important fact is that the heart of man can be changed. It requires help from Yahweh to bring about this change but that help is always available to anyone who really wants it. Yahweh will cleanse the heart of its evil tendencies and desires whenever the individual is willing to cooperate with him. This is a vital part of the doctrine of freedom. In accordance with their conception, the freedom of each person consists in his ability to accept or to reject the help which is thus offered to him.

The Old Testament teaching about freedom includes social as well as individual responsibilities. Prophets, lawgivers, historians, and sages were vigorous in their condemnation of slavery and oppression of every kind. The Hebrew nation had its beginning in a revolt against the oppression of an Egyptian Pharaoh. Israel's kings were taken to task when they failed to respect the rights of free citizens. The great prophets of the eighth and seventh centuries devoted much of their time and attention to a protest against the social and economic injustices which placed restrictions upon the rights and liberties of the common man. One of the major objectives of the Deuteronomic reformation was the achievement of a greater degree of freedom for those who had been denied opportunities for a full and wholesome type of living. As stated by one of the prophets of the post-Exilic period, the spirit of Yahweh is directed toward "setting at liberty" all those who are bound.[23]

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[22] Jer. 17:9.

Philosophy of History

Approximately one-third of the Old Testament is composed of historical writings. The Judean and Ephraimite histories form an important part of the literature which appeared prior to the Babylonian exile. The two Books of Kings contain a history of the Hebrew nation from the times of David and Solomon through the period of the two kingdoms and on to the reign of Josiah in Judah. Another history, parallel in some respects to this one, is found in the two Books of Chronicles. Both the Deuteronomic and the Priestly Codes of Law are presented in the framework of historical narratives. A great deal of historical material is included in the writings of the prophets and the same is true of other portions of the literature.

The Old Testament histories were not written primarily for the purpose of preserving a record of past events. They were intended to teach important lessons having to do with the moral and religious life of the people. History, from the point of view of the Hebrew writers, was neither a meaningless succession of events nor was it rigidly determined by forces over which human beings have no control. History was meaningful to them because it revealed the workings of a divine purpose in connection with the affairs of men. Yahweh made an important difference in the lives of men and of nations. Still, his actions were not the sole determinant of the historical process. Human beings, through the exercise of their powers of choice, could make a difference too. True, they could never completely overthrow or thwart the purpose of Yahweh but they could postpone its realization or change the course of events by means of which it could be fulfilled. In other words, history, in the minds of the Hebrew writers, was a record of the way in which Yahweh works toward the fulfilment of a purpose that can be realized only through the voluntary cooperation of human

[23] Isa. 58:6.

beings. Men are not coerced directly into doing the things they ought to do. They are given the opportunity to learn through their own experiences that transgression of Yahweh's commandments is bound to be followed by consequences which they do not wish to accept.

Each of the Old Testament interpreters of history expressed his own understanding of the divine purpose and the means which Yahweh was using for bringing about its fulfilment. In the early Judean history it is the establishment of the Hebrew nation in the land of Canaan by overcoming a long series of obstacles. In the Deuteronomic history it is the attitude of the Hebrew people toward the law of the central sanctuary that has determined the course of events. In the late Priestly history the great institutions of the Hebrew religion provide the key for an understanding of the historical process. The prophets saw in history a series of rewards and punishments which Yahweh had sent both the Hebrew people and the foreign nations on the basis of their obedience to the moral principles which were back of his specific requirements. Deutero-Isaiah was so deeply impressed by the idea of moral law as the key to the meaning of history that he could say of Yahweh in contrast to the so-called gods of the foreign nations that he knows "the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done." [24]

No single characteristic of the Old Testament interpretation of history is more significant than the conviction on the part of the various writers that something outside of history is necessary in order to understand the historical process itself. The meaning of history requires the presence of something that is logically prior to history and also something that goes beyond any of the actual achievements of history. History, in the Old Testament, is to a very great extent a record of conflict between the forces of good and of evil. This implies the existence of a reality that is prior to the conflict and a goal, toward which the process is directed, that in some sense transcends the achievement of any particular point in time. The reality that is prior to the conflict is found in the conception of Yahweh and the goal toward which the process is directed is represented in Hebrew eschatology. Messianism is another important concept which has reference to the method used by Yahweh in the realization of his purpose.

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[24] Isa. 46:9-10.

The beginnings of history and of the conflict between good and evil are, in the Old Testament, enshrouded in mystery. Whatever understanding the Hebrew writers may have had concerning them are symbolized in such stories as the creation of the earth, the temptation of Adam and Eve, the fall of man and expulsion from the Garden of Eden. The Old Testament has more to say about eschatology or the doctrine of last things. Historians, prophets, and apocalyptists wrote at considerable length concerning the things that must happen in order to bring about a full realization of the divine purpose on this earth. Of these three groups of writers the historians have the least to say concerning eschatological matters. Their interest in things to come was very definitely related to the purpose only partially realized in the events that had taken place. In order to understand this purpose which alone could give meaning to the events of history, it was necessary to have in mind some conception of the ultimate goal toward which it was directed. It was in this connection that they looked beyond the present day in which they were living and projected their ideals into the distant future.

The prophets were more explicit in their teaching about last things. They were constantly speaking to their contemporaries about events to take place at some future time. This does not imply that the prophet had any advance information about what would happen at any specific date. It means simply that he believed certain things would have to happen sometime in order to make possible the fulfilment of the divine purpose. The prophet was sure in his own mind that Yahweh's purpose could never be ultimately defeated. The triumph of Yahweh's cause might be temporarily delayed but in the end it would be accomplished. The rule of justice and righteousness would be established sometime. It was a conviction of this type which led the authors of different parts of Isaiah to predict the coming of a warless world and to paint a picture of the ideal state where "the wolf and the lamb shall feed together" and "a little child shall lead them." [25]

It is not until we come to the apocalyptic writings that we find the most elaborate development of eschatological doctrines. The authors of this part of the Old Testament literature were concerned primarily with the outcome of the great conflict between the forces of good and of evil. They saw the saints or chosen people of Yahweh suffering bitter persecution at the hands of their enemies. The evil powers in the world had gained the ascendency and the reign of terror would become even worse as they approached the time of the end. But, just when the outlook for the people of God would appear the darkest deliverance would come. Yahweh would intervene on behalf of his people. He would completely destroy the wicked. The kingdom of the saints would be established and they would reign forever.

The belief in the coming of a Messiah is another important element in the Old Testament conception of history. It had to do with the way in which Yahweh's purpose would be realized here on earth. The Messiah was to be divinely appointed to His task. His leadership and guidance would bring about the hopes and aspirations of the nation. He would act as Yahweh's representative and lead the people into a fulfilment of their destiny. Through the process of anointing their first king the people gave evidence of their belief that he was the one through whom their expectations would be met. Saul's career turned out rather badly and when his successors were anointed it was hoped they would do better. In time the belief arose that sometime a king would appear in their midst who would possess those qualities of goodness which had been lacking in their former rulers. He would be an ideal king and he would rule in justice and righteousness forever. Different conceptions of this king or Messiah appeared from time to time but instead of the golden age being realized conditions kept getting worse and worse. Finally the messianic belief developed into a conviction that eventually Yahweh would send a heavenly being into the world for the accomplishment of his purpose.

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[25] Isa. 65:25; 11:6.

The Problem of Evil

The facts of suffering, pain, and death on the part of human beings have given rise to one of the most difficult problems in the philosophy of religion. The amount of suffering and the way in which it is distributed have led to a multitude of questions that are hard to answer. Many an individual has wondered whether in view of these facts of experience it is possible to believe in a just and powerful God. How did suffering and pain enter the world in the first place? Would it be possible for God to remove the suffering? Does it serve a good purpose? Is it distributed in a manner that is just and fair to the individual who suffers? These questions and many others are bound to arise when people think seriously about God in relation to the actual experiences of human beings.

The problem of evil is not omitted in the literature of the Old Testament. It is faced to some extent by nearly all of the writers, but of course there were some who had thought about it more deeply than others. The answers which are given to the various questions that arise are not all alike but they include some of the most profound reflections on the subject that have ever been recorded. While it may be true that no one of these writers ever succeeded in reaching a final solution for the problem of evil, what they had to say about it will probably throw more light on it than can be obtained from any other single source.

The oldest view about suffering and the one which was most widely accepted by the Hebrew people is that pain occurs only as a punishment for the sins of the people. This view is illustrated in almost every part of the prophetic and historical writings. The historians were always insisting that the calamities which befell the nation were punishments which Yahweh had sent upon them because of some sin that had been committed. The prophets, too, never ceased to proclaim the coming of catastrophe whenever the nation would follow a course contrary to the will of Yahweh. Sometimes this view is carried to the extreme in which every instance of sickness, poverty, or misfortune is interpreted as a just recompense for the conduct of the individual. In the earlier literature it is not uncommon to find the view that a whole nation may suffer because of the sin of one person, or those of one generation may have to suffer for the misdeeds of another. However, in any case, suffering is interpreted as a punishment for sin.

Jeremiah and Ezekiel were among the first to challenge the idea that Yahweh punishes one person for the sins of another. Both of them stoutly maintained that each individual must bear the punishment for his own sins.[26] No one would ever be made to suffer for the sins of another. Nothing short of this position could possibly meet the demands of justice. But is this view in harmony with the facts of experience? More than one Hebrew writer became convinced that it is not. Habakkuk was one of the first to question seriously the justice of the things he had observed. He saw the righteous people oppressed while wicked men held positions of power which gave them wealth and prosperity. He pondered the question and apparently found satisfaction in the conviction that "the righteous shall live by his faith." [27]

It is the author of the Book of Job who makes the clearest analysis of this problem that can be found in the Old Testament. He knows that righteous persons do have to suffer and there is no justice in pronouncing them sinners because they do. He refutes every argument that can be given to prove that those who suffer are getting what they deserve. He does not abandon his faith in God but he shows beyond any question of a doubt that the time-honored solutions to the problem of evil cannot be accepted by anyone who will honestly face the facts of human experience.

The author of Ecclesiastes would agree that the suffering of individuals is not proportionate to the sins which they have committed. His attitude is that of the cynic who is fully convinced that life does not have the meaning or significance that has usually been attached to it. This is the way things are and there is nothing that can be done about it. His advice to people is to make the best they can of a rather sad and unfortunate situation.

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[26] Jer. 31:30; Ezek. 18:4.
[27] Hab. 2:4.

A totally different attitude is expressed in the "Poems of the Suffering Servant" which are included in the Book of Isaiah. The author of these poems finds in suffering something more than a punishment for sin. It is something which may be accepted voluntarily by persons who are anxious to bring about the salvation of others. Innocent persons may choose to suffer the punishment which belongs to those who are guilty. They may do this in order to win those who would never be moved by the power of argument. They may be won by love as it is expressed in vicarious suffering. The author is not saying that this is a complete answer to the problem of evil. He recognizes that a great deal of suffering cannot be explained in this way. But neither can all of it be explained as punishment for sin. Perhaps each of these interpretations contains an important truth which needs to be taken into account with reference to some aspect of the problem.

INDEX OF SCRIPTURE REFERENCES *

PAGE

THE OLD TESTAMENT

Genesis
  1 ... 39, 48
  2 ... 39, 101
  2:2-7 ... 107
  2:7 ... 37
  2:18-25 ... 108
  3 ... 523
  3:6 ... 524
  3:17-19 ... 108
  4:23-24 ... 76
  6:1-6 ... 109
  9:25-27 ... 427
  12 ... 36, 111
  15 ... 46, 123
  21 ... 35
  22:1-20 ... 126
  25:27-34 ... 127
  26 ... 35
  29:31 ... 69
  30:22-23 ... 127
  31:8-10 ... 128
  31:33-35 ... 128
  37 ... 114
  39-50 ... 114
  44:15 ... 146
  45:5-8 ... 131-32
  49:2-27 ... 83
  49:8-29 ... 427
  50 ... 114
Exodus
  2-20 ... 77
  3:13-14 ... 58
  3:16 ... 58
  6:3 ... 62
  12:37 ... 115
  15:1-18 ... 116, 444
  15:20-21 ... 77, 116
  18:12 ... 62
  19:18 ... 60
  20:19 ... 135

PAGE

  20:23 ... 85
  21:23-24 ... 89
  22:29 ... 85
  23:15-19 ... 85
  23:19 ... 87
  32:24 ... 136
  33:22-23 ... 116
  34:14-26 ... 85
Leviticus
  16 ... 355
  17:11 ... 346
  19:17-18 ... 348
  20 ... 347
  20:25 ... 347-48
  20:26 ... 348
  25:3-4 ... 346
  25:23 ... 68
Numbers
  11:16-17 ... 84
  12 ... 36
  21:17-18 ... 77
  21:27-30 ... 77
  22:7-8 ... 146
  23:7-10, 18-24 ... 83
  24:3-9 ... 83
  24:5 ... 83
  31:25-27 ... 84
  35:34 ... 68
Deuteronomy
  3 ... 35
  5:9 ... 239
  5-26 ... 223
  6:4-5 ... 335
  7:13 ... 343
  7:15 ... 343
  12:1-14 ... 334
  12:13-14 ... 233
  14:3-20 ... 342
  15:1-11 ... 337
  15:9-10 ... 338
  15:12-18 ... 338

---

* All quotations are from the *Revised Standard Version.*

PAGE
Deuteronomy—*Continued*
18:10-14 146
19:1-10 340
19:14 339
21:1-4 342
21:18-21 343
22:8 339
22:9-11 342
24:6 339
24:10-13 339
24:14-15 339
24:19 340
25:5-10 401
25:13-15 339
28 223
28:37-41 344
33:2 63
34:6 35
34:10 137
Joshua
10 65
11 65
12 65
24:14 62, 138
Judges
1:19 71, 513
5 60
5:3 78
5:4-5 62, 81
5:6-7 79
5:9 80
5:14-15 80
5:17-18, 23 81
5:20 82
5:31 82
9:7-15 356
11 68
14 356
Ruth
1:1-5 399
1:16-17 400
4:7 397
4:13-17 401
I Samuel
1 69
6:2 146
7:15 92
8:22 92
9 146
9:10 146
10:5 147
11 92
12 92
15:17-23 524
19:18-24 148
19:19-20 148

PAGE
19:20 148
21 73
28:6-31 497
30:21-25 84
II Samuel
1:17 82
1:19, 25 82
1:25-26 83
11 524
21 74
21:19 93
I Kings
3:9 96
4:32 358, 441
11 95
17:19-21 160
19:8 63
21 524
II Kings
2:5 147
4:25 165
4:38 147
5:17 68
10:15 63
14:25 165, 389
21:10-15 223
22 233, 334
23 233
II Chronicles
26:19-21 197
33:19 484
Ezra
9 486
10 486
Nehemiah
13:23-30 398
13 486
Esther
6:6-7 405
9:26-32 402
Job
1:11 364
1:21 364
2:5 365
3:1-26 366
4:7-9, 17-19 367
6:24-26 367
8:20 367
9:19-21 368
11:5-6 368
13:7-9 368
13:15-16 369
16:2-4 369
19:25 369
32:8-12 370
33:8-12 370

PAGE
- 38:4-7 371-72
- 42:1-6 372

Psalms
- 8 444
- 8:1-4 445
- 8:3-5 458
- 14:1 437
- 17:15 461
- 19 440, 444
- 19:1, 6 445
- 19:7-9 459-60
- 19:12-13 458
- 20 442
- 21 442
- 22:1-2 452
- 24 71, 441
- 29 444, 445
- 29:3-4 446
- 37:9-11, 25 460
- 39:3-4 446
- 42:1-3, 11 453
- 44:9, 11, 13, 23-24 451
- 46 440, 444, 446
- 46:1-2, 5, 6 446
- 50 440
- 51 440, 520
- 51:1-17 453-54
- 51:6-7 459
- 51:17 521
- 51:18-19 455
- 53:1 437
- 73:23-25 460-61
- 74 441
- 82:1 457
- 83 441
- 84 444, 447
- 84:1, 5, 10 447
- 95:1, 6, 7 447
- 95:3 457
- 95 444
- 97:1, 6, 10, 12 451
- 103 444
- 103:2, 6-8 448
- 119:97, 104 459
- 122:1-2, 4 449
- 137 440
- 137:1-4 440
- 137:7-9 313-14, 437, 521
- 139 444
- 146 444
- 146:1, 7, 9 449

Proverbs
- 1:7 387
- 3:11 387
- 3:13-15 359, 382
- 3:16 385

PAGE
- 3:19 382
- 4:5-8 381
- 4:7 359
- 11:25 385
- 14:34 385
- 19:17 385

Ecclesiastes
- 1:7-8 375
- 1:9-11 376
- 1:15 377
- 3:16 377
- 3:19-21 377
- 7:16 378
- 9:2 377
- 9:5-6 378
- 9:15 377
- 12:12 464
- 12:13-14 380

Isaiah
- 1:1 271, 357
- 1:3 205, 524
- 1:11-17 205-6
- 2:1 271, 357
- 2:12, 17, 19 206-7
- 3:14-15 204
- 3:16-25 204
- 5:8 197, 205, 332
- 5:23 205
- 5:25 207
- 6 195, 198
- 6:1 201, 409
- 6:3 202
- 6:5 203
- 6:10 211
- 7 151
- 7:1-9 199
- 7:3 207
- 7:14-16 208
- 9:1-9 214
- 9:6 215
- 9:7 215-16
- 10:20-23 212
- 11:1-2 216
- 11:1-9 214
- 11:3-5 216-17
- 11:6 529
- 13:1-14 195
- 23 195
- 24-27 195
- 30:1-3 209, 524
- 30:15 210
- 31:1-3 209
- 31:1-9 333
- 32:1-2 217
- 34-39 195
- 36 200

PAGE
Isaiah—*Continued*
37 200
37:35 238
39 199
40:1-2 279
40:2 271
40:3-4 .... 271, 273, 279
40:8-9 .... 277, 513
40:12, 26 281-82
40:13-16 277
40:21-23 278
40:27-29 278
40:28 513
41:7 280
42:1-4 .... 290, 393
42:4 274
44:1-2 290
44:28 274
45:1-4 .... 271, 274, 282
46:1-2 280-81
46:8-9 282
46:9-10 527
49:5-6 .... 274, 290-91
50:6 291
52:13-15 291
53 11
53:1-11 291-93
54:5-7 278
58 520
58:6 526
65:25 529
Jeremiah
1:1 224
1:13-15 230
3:11-12 231-32
4:3-4 233
4:23-24 230
7:1-3 259
7:1-15 238
7:2, 4, 8, 12, 14 238
11:21 224
13:1-11 243
13:23 235
17:7-8 242
17:9 .... 451, 525
17:9-10 234
18:1-12 243
18:18 356
22:13-18 310
22:24, 28 226
26:18 296
29:1-20 243
31 87
31:3 232
31:15-16 232

PAGE
31:20 .... 28, 231
31:27-30 240
31:29-30 .... 363, 531
31:31-34 .... 236, 241, 518
31:33 511
32:6-16 243
44 .... 229, 243
Ezekiel
1:1-3 246
1:4-5, 10-11, 17, 26 251
2:3 252
2:5 252
2:8-10 253
3:1-3 253
3:16-21 262
3:18 262
4:1-8 256
4:9-13 257
5:1-4 257
8:5-18 255
8:14 255
12:1-16 257
14:19-20 260
16:36 255
18 261
18:1-4 .... 260, 363
18:4 .... 261, 531
18:21-22 260
18:24 260
24:15-18 257
33 261
36:25 .... 253, 265, 511
36:25-26 511
36-39 287
37:12-13 266
37:15-23 263
39:21-22 265
Daniel
1 424
1:1-7 414
1:8 424
1:15, 20 424
2 427
2:40 428
2:44 428
3:15 425
3:16-18 425
3:24-25 426
6 426
7 429
7:25-27 .... 414, 430
8 431
8:13, 14, 21 431
9:24-25 432
12:1-2 432

PAGE

Hosea
3:1-3 183
4:1-2 187
4:6 .... 189, 524
5:13-14 333
6:6 190
7:8 189
7:11 189
11:1 19
11:1, 4 187
11:8 188

Joel
2:12-13 325-26
2:25-26 327
3:12-13, 15 326

Amos
1 336
1:1 165
1:3, 6, 9 173
2 336
2:6-7 174
3:1-3 180
3:4-6 172
4:4-5 176
5:2 .... 156, 175
5:12 332
5:15 176
5:18, 20 .... 177, 230
5:21-24 .... 170, 176
6:1-6 332
6:3-4 166
7:7-9 .... 169, 409
7:10-13 171
7:13 152
7:14 150
8:1-3 169
8:2-3 409
9:11, 14 156

Obadiah
1:9-10 314

Jonah
1:1 389
1:2 390
1:5 391
2:10 391
3:4 391
3:5-6 391
4:10-11 392

Micah
1:1 296
2:1-2 299
2:6-8 299
2:6-11 332
3:1-3 298-99
3:5-6 300
3:9-11 300

PAGE

3:12 .... 239, 298
4:1-3 300
5:2 .... 297, 301
6:6-8 297
6:8 .... 153, 337, 521

Nahum
1:3-8 306
2:2-6 307
2:4 312
2:12-13 307
3:1-7 308

Habakkuk
1:2-4 310-11
2:4 .... 312, 531
2:9, 12 311

Zephaniah
1:1 301
1:2-3 303
1:14-16 303
1:18 303
3:4-5 302
3:9 304
3:12-13 304-5

Haggai
1:7-10 316
2:9 317

Zechariah
1:17 318
1:18-21 318
2:1-5 318
2:8 319
2:10-12 318
3:1-2 319
3:2 319
4:6 .... 318, 320

Malachi
1:6-7 322
1:10-11 323
2:15-16 324
3:1 321
3:6 511
3:7-11 323-24

THE NEW TESTAMENT

Matthew
2:17 272
3:3 272
8:17 272
16:14 220
21:13 220
24:15 470
26:28 220

Mark
13:4 220
14:24 .... 220, 470

PAGE
- Luke
  - 3:4 272
  - 4:17 272
  - 22:20 (*ASV*) 220
- John
  - 1:14 493
  - 1:23 272
- Romans
  - 1:17 312
  - 10:16 272
- I Corinthians
  - 6:2 485
- II Corinthians
  - 3:2, 3 221
- II Thessalonians
  - 2:3 485, 490
- Hebrews
  - 11:32 147
  - 11:35-37 474
- Jude
  - 1:9, 14 412, 485
  - 1:14 493
- Revelation
  - 19:10 154

THE APOCRYPHA*

- I Esdras
  - 1:28-29 466
  - 2:10-15 466
  - 3, 4 466
  - 8, 9 467
- II Esdras
  - 10:28 468
  - 13:25-40 469
  - 14:39-48 464
  - 14:48 470
- I Maccabees
  - 1:41-51 421
  - 1:54-64 421
  - 1:59 471
  - 2:1-38 422
  - 4:37-61 423, 472
  - 16:23-24 470
- II Maccabees
  - 2:23-31 473
  - 3:13-30 474
  - 5:25-26 473
  - 6:11 473
  - 6:18-31 474

PAGE
- Tobit
  - 1:3-8 475
  - 3:6 475
  - 3:15 475
  - 6:1-8 475
- Judith
  - 5:20-21 476
  - 7:12-15 476
  - 12:17-20 476
  - 13:8-9 477
- Ecclesiasticus
  - 12:8 479
  - 19:10-11 478
  - 19:30 479
  - 20:18 478
  - 22:11 478
  - 26:14 478
  - 27:2 479
  - 31:20 479
  - 41:3, 4 479
  - 41:12-13 479
  - 50:27 478
- Wisdom of Solomon
  - 2:1 480
  - 2:21-22 480
  - 2:24 479
  - 3:1, 4 480

THE PSEUDEPIGRAPHA†

- Book of Jubilees
  - 1 487
  - 1:26-27 487
  - 23:27-30 488
- Zadokite Fragment
  - 1:7 490
  - 6:1 490
  - 9:53 490
- Letter of Aristeas
  - 311-13 491
  - 207 491
- Adam and Eve
  - xxi:1-3 491
  - li:1 492
- Ascension of Isaiah
  - 1:9 492
  - 5:9-14 492
- Book of Enoch
  - 24:1-6 493
  - 27:1-5 494

---

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PAGE
Book of Enoch—*Continued*
  35-90 495
  38:2 494
  38:5-6 494
  90 495
Testament of Reuben
  2:6 496
Testament of Simeon
  3:5-6 496
Testament of Gad
  6:3, 7 497
Testament of Judah
  15:2 497
  24:1 497
Sibylline Oracles Bk. iv,
  119-24 498
Assumption of Moses
  10:11-12 499
Secrets of Enoch
  32:1-2 500
  33:1-2 500
III Baruch
  4:8 501
IV Esdras
  7:28-29 502

INDEX OF NAMES AND TITLES

Aaron 62, 133, 135, 353
Abednego 424 ff.
Abiathar 91
Abimelech 125, 138
Abner 94
Abraham 35, 46, 59, 60, 69, 111, 113, 347, 351, 352
Achan 137, 259
Achish, King 93
Adad 61
Adonai 51, 457
Adoni-zedek 137
Agag 139, 140
Ahab 97, 98, 161, 162
Ahasuerus 403
Ahaz 151, 194, 198, 207
Ahikar 504
Ai 137
Alexander the Great 417, 418
Alexander, Hartley B. 360
Alexandria 417
Amalek 134
Amalekites 93, 524
Amaziah 171
American Standard Version 51
Amittai 380, 389
Ammon 68, 95, 263
Ammonites 35
Amon 223, 230
Amorites 77
Amos 164 ff.
Anath 79
Anathoth 223
Annals, Royal 75, 103
Ante-Nicean Fathers 143, 410
Antiochus IV 418, 421 ff.
Antiochus Epiphanes 416, 476, 503
Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament 487, 488
Apologia 143, 410
Aquinas, Thomas 5
Arabia 60
Archaeology and the Religion of Israel 53
Archaeology of Palestine 53
Archeology and the Bible 53
Aristotle 22, 417
Armenia 198
Artaxerxes 466
Asaph Psalter 442
Ashtart 53, 56
Ashurbanipal 224
Asmodeus 475
Assyria 121, 165, 181
Assyrians 174, 209, 306, 308 ff.
Augustine 5, 17
Azariah 475

Babel, tower of 40
Babylon 278
Babylonia 224, 320
Babylonians 123, 252, 313
Bailey, Albert E. 6, 67, 121, 181
Balaam 83, 117
Balak 83, 117
Barak 80
Barnes, W. E. 443
Barton, Bruce 8
Barton, G. A. 53, 61
Bathsheba 95, 524
Beer-sheba 35, 112
Beginnings of Hebrew History 105
Bel and the Dragon 482
Belair 492
Belshazzar 275
Benhadad I 97 ff.
Benjamin 80, 114
Bertocci, Peter A. 360
Bethel 42, 113, 152, 171
Bewer, Julius A. 12, 28, 69, 88, 101, 272, 310, 374, 436
Beyond Tragedy 110
Bildad 366
Blessing of Jacob 83
Boaz 400, 401
Book of the Acts of Solomon 75, 95, 103
Book of the Covenant 70, 87 ff., 286
Book of the Wars of Yahweh 75, 82, 103
Book of Yashur the Upright 75, 82, 103
Book That Nobody Knows, The 8
Brightman, Edgar S. 101
Browning, Robert 6

Brunner, Emil 507
Buttenweiser, M. 360

Canaan 50
Canaanites 51 ff., 159, 191, 335
Carchemish 226
Cardinal Ideas of Isaiah, The 11
Case, Shirley J. 5, 411
Chaldeans 309, 311
Charles, R. H. 487, 488
Chebar 246
Chilion 399
Christianity 3
City of God, The 5
Code of Hammurabi 88
Colenso, John W. 42
Complete Bible: An American Translation 465
Conjectures on the Original Memoirs Which It Appears That Moses Employed to Compose the Pentateuch 39
Croesus 275
Critical History of the Old Testament 37
Cyrus 271, 275, 417, 466

Dagan 91
Damascus 173, 174, 198, 207
Dan 80, 496
Daniel 249
Daniel and Its Critics 415
Daniel and Revelation, Thoughts on 415
Darius 466
Dathan 136
David 401
Davidic Dynasty 196, 197
Deborah 80, 159
Democritus 22, 504, 523
Destiny of Western Man, The 241
Deutero-Isaiah 270 ff.
DeWette, Wilhelm 42, 43
DeWolf, L. Harold 508
Diblaim 182
Discourse on Deuteronomy 42, 75
Documentary Hypothesis 33
Dragon, Bel and the 482

Eakin, Frank 14, 18, 30
Early Judean History 99
Edom 81, 173
Edomites 313
Egypt 263
Egyptians 238, 310
Eichhorn, J. G. 30, 40
Eleazar 474
Elhanan 93
Eliakim 225
Elihu 360 ff.
Elijah the Tishbite 160
Elijah Stories 160
Eliphaz 366
Elisha 68, 98
Elohim 39, 46, 123
Elohist, The 41
Emerson, R. W. 6
Encyclopaedia Brittanica 30
Enoch 51, 109, 133
Ephraim 80, 122, 189
Epicurean 374
Epiphanes, Antiochus 476, 503
Epistle of Jeremiah 483
Esau 42, 112, 313
Essentials of Bible History 12, 65, 76, 104, 121, 195, 222, 274, 302, 468
Esther 404
Evil, The Problem of 360
Ezekiel 246 ff.

Fellowship of the Prophets, The Goodly 145, 181, 276, 305
Filson, F. V. 53
Finegan, Jack 53
Folklore in the Old Testament 105
Fosdick, Harry E. 14
Fowler, H. T. 12, 158, 442
Fraser, J. G. 105
Freudian Psychology 517
From the Stone Age to Christianity 53

Galilee 220
Garden of Eden 15, 40
Gath 93
Gaza 173, 174
Gedaliah 228
Gentle Cynic, A 373
Gerar 125
Getting Acquainted With the New Testament 14, 30
Gibeah 147
Gideon 138
Gibeonites 73, 137
Gilbert, G. H. 5
Gilead 80, 173
Gilgal 147
Gilgamesh epic 105
Gnostics 17
God Almighty 62, 352, 457
Goliath 93
Gomer 182, 183
Gomorrah 112
Good and Evil, Studies in 360

Goodly Fellowship of the Prophets, The 145, 181, 276, 305
Goodspeed, Edgar J. 462, 465
Gordon, Cyrus H. 53
Goshen 114
Growth and Contents of the Old Testament 85, 329

Habakkuk 308 ff.
Haggai 314 ff.
Hagar 112, 125
Halle, University of 41
Hallelujah Psalter 442
Hammurabi, Code of 88
Harran 60, 112
Hazael 98
Heber the Kenite 63, 81
Heliodorus 474
Heshbon 77
Hezekiah 194, 199, 200, 208, 209, 212, 301, 381, 446, 492
Hexateuch 44
Hilkiah 334
Historical Consciousness 100
History, The Conception of 100
History of the Hebrew Commonwealth 6, 67, 121, 181, 195
History of the Literature of Ancient Israel, The 12, 158, 442
History of New Testament Times With an Introduction to the Apocrypha 475
History of New Testament Times in Palestine, A 417
History of the Old Testament, A Critical 37
History of Religion, Studies in the 61
History of Suzanna 481
Hittites 65
Holofernes 476
Holy, The Idea of the 203
Horeb 61, 63, 132, 134, 163
Horonite 398
Hosea 19, 31, 180 ff.
Hoshea 181
Human Nature, Nature and 360
Hupfield, Hermann 41
Hyrcanus, John 403, 472, 496

Idea of the Holy, The 203
Ilgen, David Karl 41
Introduction to the Books of the Old Testament 12
Introduction to the Old Testament 34, 44, 77, 101, 123, 221, 246, 272, 305, 330, 416, 435, 443, 463
Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion 360
Isaac 113, 119
Isaiah 10, 22, 194 ff.
Isaiah, The Martyrdom of 201
Ishbaal 94
Ishmael 112, 125
Israel 207
Israel, The Prophets of 145

Jabbok 113
Jabin of Hazor 138
Jacob 41, 59, 69, 313, 347
Jael 63, 79, 81
James, Fleming 331, 444
Jastrow, Morris 360, 361
Jebusites 94
Jefferson, C. E. 11
Jehoahaz 225, 310
Jehoiakim 225, 226, 239, 244, 246, 250, 310
Jehoida 398
Jehoram 98
Jehovah 45, 457
Jehu 63
Jepthah 68
Jeremiah 22, 28, 63, 220 ff.
Jericho 65, 137, 147
Jeroboam II 164, 165, 169, 171, 196
Jerome 464
Jerusalem 47, 72, 194, 212, 259, 270, 398
Jesse 216
Jesus of Nazareth 4, 154, 217, 218
Jesus and His Bible 5
Jesus ben-Sirach 477, 479
Jethro 62, 132, 135
Jezebel 63, 161 ff.
Joab 94
Job 249, 359 ff.
Joel 324
John the Baptist 18
Jonadab 63
Jonah 390, 395
Jonathan 82, 92, 93
Jonathan, brother of Judas Maccabeus 472
Jordan 68
Joseph 19, 59, 113, 130
Joshua 117, 137, 319
Josiah 43, 310, 330, 446
Judaism 49
Judas Maccabeus 472 ff.
Justin Martyr 142, 143, 410

Kenite 63, 81
Kenites 63

Kent, Charles F. 6, 67, 85, 121, 329
Kierkegaard, S. 507
King, A. R. 360
Koheleth 374

Laban 347
Lachish 200
Lamech 76, 109
Leah 127
Lemuel 381
Leucippus 523
Liberty Bell 7
Literature of the Old Testament, The 69, 88, 101, 310, 374, 436, 443
Logos 15
Louis XV 39
Luther, Martin 312
Lydia 275

Maccabeus, Judas 472 ff.
Mahanaim 94
Mahlon 399
Malachi 321
Mamre 111
Manasseh 200, 223, 230, 302, 333, 492
Manasseh, Prayer of 484
Marah 116
Martyrdom of Isaiah 201, 333
Marx, Karl 517
Masa, Yakeh of 381
Mattaniah 227
Mattathias 422, 471
Media 198, 224
Meet Amos and Hosea 145, 181
Megiddo 78, 81, 310
Memoirs Which It Appears That Moses Employed to Compose the Pentateuch, Conjectures on the 39
Menahem 181, 191, 198
Merodach-baladin 199
Meroz 81
Meshach 424
Mesopotamia 41, 112
Messiah 312 ff., 413, 469
Micah 43, 218, 296 ff.
Micaiah 97
Michael 491, 501
Midian, Plains of 51, 114
Midianites 61, 130
Milton, John 6
Minear, Paul S. 100
Miriam 76, 77, 134, 136
Moab 117, 173, 174, 263, 400
Modein 471
Modern Use of the Bible, The 14
Mordecai 403, 404
Moses 15
Moses, The Song of 116
Mould, E. W. K. 12, 65, 76, 104, 121, 195, 222, 274
Mount Carmel 161
Mount Sinai 60, 61 (also called Mount Horeb)

Naamathite 366
Nabonidus 275
Naboth 163, 172, 524
Nadon 504
Nahum, 305 ff.
Naioth 149
Namaan 68
Naomi 400
Naphtali, 81, 214
Nature and Destiny of Man, The 516
Nature and Human Nature 360
Nazareth, Jesus of 217, 218
Nebo 280
Nebuchadnezzar 225, 226, 275, 414, 424 ff.
Necho 225
Neo-Orthodox School 507
Nergilissar 275
Niebuhr, Reinhold 507, 516
Nineveh 224, 308, 390
Noah 110, 249, 352
Nob 73

Obadiah 312 ff.
Obed 401
Obermann, Julian 53
Oesterley, W. O. 12
Og 35
Old Testament, Its Making and Meaning 12
Omri 97, 98
Oracles of Balaam 83
Origen 17
Orpha 400
Otto, Rudolph 203

Paran 117
Passover 48, 69, 341, 351
Paterson, John 145, 181, 276, 305, 434
Paul, the Apostle 4, 312
Pekah 181, 198
Pekahiah 181
Pentateuch 37, 42, 44
Persia 272, 275
Personalities of the Old Testament 297, 331
Pfeiffer, Robert H. 34, 44, 77, 101, 122, 123, 183, 195, 221, 246, 249,

272, 285, 293, 305, 330, 349, 362, 416, 435, 463, 475
Pharaoh 6, 131, 132
Pharaoh-Necho 224
Philip of Macedonia 417
Philistia 263
Philistines 91
Philo 15
Philosophical Theology 360
Philosophy of Spinoza, The 34
Phoenicia 96
Pithom 114
Plato 22
Pope Damascus 464
Potiphar 113, 130, 131, 132
Praises of Israel, The 434
Prayer of Manasseh 484
Prometheus 105
Prophecy, Studies in Old Testament 145
Prophets of Israel, The 145
Prophets and Their Times, The 145
Prophets, The Relevance of the 17, 144
Psalms and Their Meaning for To-day, The 435, 439
Psalmists, Thirty 444
Psalter, Asaph 442
Psalter, David 442
Psalter, Hallelujah 442
Psalter, Korah 442
Psalter, Pilgrim 442

Queen Esther 404
Queen of Sheba 96

Raamses 114
Rabshekeh 212
Rachel 127, 128
Ragae 475
Rahab 137
Ramah 148
Ras Shamra Tablets 53
Ratner, Joseph 34
Rebekah 96, 112
Rechab the Kenite 63
Red Sea 115, 116, 134
Rehoboam 121
Religious Experience, The Varieties of 185
Religion of Israel, The 12
Religious Revolt Against Reason, The 508
Rephidim 134
Reuben 80
Revelation of John, The 5, 411
Revised Standard Version 51
Rezin 198
Riblah 225
Rise and Fall of the House of Omri, The 97
Robinson, H. W. 12
Robinson, T. H. 145
Rowley, H. H. 145
Royal Annals 75, 103
Royce, Josiah 360

Samaria 97, 170, 199, 204, 211
Samaritans 466
Samson 356
Samuel 139 ff.
Sanballat 398
Sarah 347
Sargon 199
Satan 319, 364, 365, 413
Saul 6, 72, 73, 139
Scott, E. F. 443
Scott, R. B. Y. 144, 173
Second Isaiah 272 ff.
Seir 81
Seleucids 417
Sennacherib 199, 446, 504
Seth 109
Septuagint 463
Shaddai El 352, 457
Shadrach 424
Shakespeare, William 6
Shallum 181
Shamgar 79
Sheba, Queen of 96
Shechem 129
Sheol 461, 479
Shinar 40, 110
Shuhite 366
Simon, brother of Judas Maccabeus 472
Simon, Father Richard 37, 38
Sinai 116
Sisera 78, 81
Smith, H. P. 12
Smith, J. M. P. 145, 465
Smith, Uriah 415
Socrates 358
Sodom 111, 112
Solomon 6, 358 ff.
Song of Deborah 71, 78, 307
Song of Moses 116
Sources of Genesis, The 41
Sources of the Hexateuch, The 101
South Sea Islands 105
Spinoza, B. 34, 35, 37
Spinoza, The Philosophy of 34
Stace, W. T. 241
Stoicism 512

Story of the Three Children 481
Student's Old Testament 101
Studies in the Book of Daniel 415
Studies in Good and Evil 360
Studies in the History of Religion 61
Suzanna, History of 481
Syria 121, 207
Syrians 97

Tamar 95
Temanite 366
Temple Annals 75, 103
Tennant, Frederick R. 360
Tennyson, Alfred 6
Theology, Philosophical 360
Thirty Psalmists 444
Tiglath-pileser 191, 197, 198
Tillich, Paul 507
Tobias 475
Toy, C. H. 61
Trattner, Ernest A. 30
Tractatus, Theologico-Politicus 34, 37
Tyre 161, 173, 174, 263

Ugarit 53
Ugaritic Grammar 53
Ugaritic Mythology 53
Unravelling the Book of Books 30
Ur of the Chaldees 60, 124
Uriel 468
Uz 364
Uzziah 196, 198, 201, 409

Valley of Jehosaphat 326
Varieties of Religious Experience 185
Vashti, Queen 403

Webster, Noah 43
Westminster Historical Atlas to the Bible 53
Wilson, R. D. 415
Wright, Charles H. H. 415
Wright, G. E. 53, 99

Yakeh of Masa 381

Zadok, Sons of 489
Zadokean priests 350
Zechariah 317 ff.
Zerubbabel 317, 320, 467
Zeus 490
Zebulun 214
Zedekiah 227, 228
Zephaniah 301 ff.
Ziglag 94
Zipporah 114
Zophar 366

INDEX OF SUBJECTS

Aaron 353
Abel, slaying of 103
Abraham 111
  covenant of 57
Accounts, biblical, discrepancies in 27, 28
Achan, sin of 137
Adam and Eve, story of 107-9
Agricultural background, Hebrew people 67
Agriculture 57
Ahaz, message to 208
Ahikar, story of 504
Allegorical method, of bible study 14-18
Allegory, use of 14-18
Alliances, foreign 207-9
  with Egypt 209
Allusions in literature, to Old Testament 4
Altruism 386
Amos 155-56, 159, 164-80
  conception of moral law 173
  conception of Yahweh 170-75
  denounces ritual 170
  historical background 165-71
  life of 165
  on the worship of Yahweh 175-76
Animals
  laws governing slaughtering of 341, 346
  punishment of 89
Anointing ceremony 90
Anthropologists 33
Anthropomorphic deity 45, 71
Anthropomorphic terms 40
Anthropomorphism 48, 336
Apocalypse of Weeks 495
Apocalyptic writers 320, 414
Apocalyptic writings 5, 19, 408-33
  characteristics of 410-14
  defined 409
  predictions concerning the end 427-33
  stories of past deliverances 423-27
Apocrypha 462-84
  classification of books of 465
  definition of 462, 464
  historical writings 465-74
  quality of writing 462-65
  short stories 474-77
  wisdom literature 477-80
Apostasy 65
Archeological research 33, 53, 65
Ark of the Covenant 87
Assumption of Moses 498-99
Assyria 298, 306-7, 309, 476-77
Atonism, moral 260-61, 512
Atonement, day of 355
Authoritarian method, of bible study 12-14

Baal worship 55, 68, 69, 70, 161, 182
Babel, tower of 111
Babylon
  culture 88, 123, 331
  deities of 280-81
  flood story 106
Babylonian captivity 246-47, 270-71, 274-80, 314-15, 396, 432
Balaam 83, 117
Belshazzar's feast 415
Biblical accounts, discrepancies in 27-28
Blood, prohibition of the eating of 48, 351, 352
Blood of the covenant 87, 352
Boiling pot, vision of 230
Books
  addition to canonical 481-84
  of Amos 155-56, 164-80
  of Baruch 483
  of the Covenant 87-91, 331-32
  of Daniel 408-33, 481-82
  of Deuteronomy 35, 42-43, 46-47, 233-35, 332-34
    origin of 42-43, 333-34
  of Ecclesiastes 357, 373-75
  of Enoch 493
  of Ezekiel 248-50, 262
  of Habakkuk 308-10
  of Isaiah 194, 270-73
  of Jeremiah 156, 220-45, 483-84
  of Job 357, 359-64
  of Joshua 65
  of Jubilees 487-90

Books—*Continued*
  of the Law 328
  of Leviticus 330
  of Malachi 322
  of Micah 296-97
  of Obadiah 312
  of Proverbs 357, 380-83
  of Zadok 489
  of Zephaniah 304
Booty, law governing division of 84
Brothers, story of the seven 474
Bullocks, offering of 455

Cain and Abel, story of 108-9
Calf, molten 136
Canaan
  conquest of 64-70, 79-83
  culture influenced Hebrews 66, 123
  festivals 57
  history of Hebrew people in 50-74
  Noah's curse on 110
  religion of 50, 53-59
Captivity, length of 256
Carchemish, battle of 226
Ceremonial and moral sins 261
Chaldea 309, 311
Children, duties of 357
Chosen people 287
Christianity, development of 3
Circumcision, rite of 48, 57, 351, 352-53
Clean and unclean 55, 342, 350
Cleanliness, ritualistic 342, 347-48
Cloud, pillar of 61
Code of Hammurabi 331
Conscience, voice of 163
Counter-reformation 333
Courage, concept of 70
Covenants
  of Abraham 57
  Ark of 87
  blood of 87
  Book of the 87-91
  new 87, 235-36
  oath of 87
  old 87
  relationship between Israel and Yahweh 62, 70, 85-87, 235, 520
Creation of woman 37
Creation stories 104-5
Criminals, conviction and punishment of 339
Criticism, biblical 11-12
  higher 25, 30-34
  lower or textural 26-30
Curses, Hebrews' attitude toward 83, 90
Cyrus, reign of 271, 274-76

D narrative 46-47
Daniel
  addition to 481
  Book of 408-32
  historical background of 414-23
  2300 days of 431
David, King
  reign of 72, 73-74, 94-95
Davidic authorship of Psalms 441
Davidic dynasty 196
Day of atonement 355
Death, resurrection from 432
Deborah, prophetess 78-80, 159
Decalogue, historical background of 84-85
Deception 73
  Isaac's 127
Deity
  Elohim; *see* Elohim
  Hosea's conception of 185, 192
  names of the 457
  nature of 506, 509-15
  Yahweh; *see* Yahweh
Deliverance
  for God's people 412, 432
  stories of past 423-27
Democracy 6
  influence of Jeremiah on 241-42
Den of lions, Daniel in 426-27, 482-83
Despair, sense of 452
Deus summus 59
Deutero-Isaiah 270-94
  attack on idol worship 280-85
  authorship of 270-73
  historical background 273-76
  monotheism of 285-93
  universalism of 281-93
Deuteronomic code of laws 255, 330, 332-34, 341-44, 521
  finding of 330
Deuteronomic narrative 46-47, 233-35
Deuteronomic reformation 233-35
Devil, personal 480
Dietary laws 424
Discouragement 452
Dishonesty in business 478-79
Dispensations, the four 352-53
Divination, practice of 146
Divine foreknowledge 283
Divine law 328; *see also* Laws
Divine purpose 110, 211, 218
  Judean narrative 103-17
Divine revelation 140-41
Divine will, prophets interpret 151
Diviners 146
Divorce 322, 324, 398-99

Documentary hypotheses 33-44, 75
  Jean Astruc on 39-40
  Johann G. Eichhord on 40
  Father Richard Simon on 37
  Spinoza on 34-37
  summary of 44-49
Douay Version, 462-64
Dragon, story of the 482
Dramatic form of presentation, Old Testament 32
Dreams 486; *see also* Visions

E narrative 46, 122; *see also* Ephraimite narrative
  source materials used by 123
Eat, drink and be merry 374, 379
Eating blood 351
Eating mandrakes 127
Ecclesiastes
  additions to 380
  Book of 357, 373-75
  value of 379-80
Ecclesiastical institutions, origin of 351-55
Ecclesiasticus 477-80
  authorship of 374
  denial of idea of progress in 375-77
Economic system 166
Edomites, Hebrews and 13, 322
Education, liberal 8
Egypt
  Abraham in 111
  alliance with 209
  army of 79
  Hebrew oppression in 50
  plagues of 115, 134
  storehouses in 131
Elihu, speeches of 370-72
Elijah, prophet 160-61
Elohim, use of name 39, 40-41, 46, 122
End, predictions concerning 427
Enoch, visions of 412, 493-94
Ephraim, history of 46
Ephraimite narrative 46, 51, 58, 59, 101, 121-41
  concept of Yahweh in 59
  contents of 125-39
  moral and religious lessons of 140-41
  purpose and scope of 122-25
  values of 139-41
Epicurean philosophers 374
Epistemology 22
Equality 89
Esau
  Jacob and 41-42
  sells birthright 112
Eschatological doctrines 528-29
Esther, story of 402-7, 483
Ethical requirements of Deuteronomic code 340
Ethical standards, Hebrew 70
Ethical teaching of sages 384-87
Ethics 503-4
Evil
  causes of 523-24
  forces of 411
  problem of 530-32
Exclusiveness, Hebrews adopt policy of 393
Exilic writings 272
Expulsion from Paradise 491
Ezekiel 246-69
  Book of 248
  destruction of Jerusalem 254-59, 262
  on future of foreign nations 260-65
  individual responsibility 254-59, 262
  opening vision 250-54, 409
  task of 246-47
  vision of valley of dry bones 266
Ezra, address of 467

Faith
  concept of 312
  for living 315
Faithfulness, to Jewish religion 414-15, 432
Faithless wife, story of 182
False prophets 300
False witness 343
Fathers, god of 58, 59
Feast
  of Belshazzar 415
  of Passover 69, 341
  of Purim 402, 406
  of Tabernacles 341
  royal 403
  of Weeks 341
Fertility gods 56
Festivals
  Canaanite 57
  marriage 57
Fiery furnace 425
Fire, pillar of 61
Flesh, swine's 342
Flood
  Babylonian story of 106
  story of great 38, 105-6
Folklore, in the Old Testament 104-5, 363
Forbidden fruit 103
Foreign alliances 207

Foreign nations
  attitude of Hebrews toward 389, 406
  future of 262
  Yahweh and 285-87, 515
Foreigners, Hebrews treatment of 343
Foreknowledge, divine 283
Frankness 437
Freedom
  of choice 283, 522-25
  of Hebrew slaves 338
  idea of 522-26
  from want 385
Fruit, forbidden 103

Gallows 405
Genealogies 353
Generosity, concept of 70
Genesis, authorship of 38, 41-42, 44-45
Gentiles 323
Gnostic movement 16
God; *see also* Yahweh
  of agriculture 57
  conception of 140-41, 509-15
    growth and development of 23
    J narrative 48
  of fathers 58, 59
  Hosea on knowledge of 193
  idea of 509-15
  relationship to man 509
  storm 60
  volcano 60
Goddess, moon 60
Gods, fertility 56
Gold, image of 92, 424
Golden rule 491
Good and evil, conflict between 413
Goodness
  character of 506
  concept of 22, 491, 521-22
Gossip, sages on 386
Greece, culture of 418-19, 490
Greek, Apocrypha translated from 465

Habakkuk 308-12
  prayer of 311
Haggai 314-17
  prayer of 315
  problem of 315
Haman, execution of 405
Hammurabi, Code of 331
Hate, hymns of 406
Heart
  broken and contrite 454
  cleansing of the 265
  religion, matter of 241
Hebrews
  folklore of 77
  law, development of 330
  period of the United Kingdom 72-74
  religion, Jeremiah's contribution to 229
  slaves given freedom 338
Heifer, breaking neck of 342
Hellenic culture, spread of 418-19, 490
Hexateuch 44, 75
Hezekiah 301
Higher criticism, method of bible study 25, 30-34, 143; *see also* Scientific method
  documentary hypothesis 33-44
Hireling prophets 149
Historical background
  of Daniel 414-23
  of Deutero-Isaiah 273-76
  of Isaiah 195-200
  of Jeremiah 222-29
  of Jonah 392-95
Historical method 25
Historical narrative 389
History
  conceptions of 21
  conflict between good and evil and 527-28
  Daniel's philosophy of 433
  Ephraimite 121-41
  influence of Old Testament on 7
  interpretation of 99
  Judean 99-120
  meaning of 506
  oral tradition in the writing of 103-4
  philosophy of 526-29
Holiness, teaching of Ezekiel on 330, 345-46
Holiness Code of Laws 330, 345-48
Holofernes, death of 477
Hortatory introduction 47, 343
Hosea 180-93
  conception of Yahweh 185-86, 192
  influence of 191-93
  story of the faithless wife 182-84
Hospitality, concept of 70
Human nature 515-19
  conception of, in Old Testament 518
Humility, spirit of 301, 518
Hymns 443-44; *see also* Psalms

Ideas, philosophical treatment of 506-7
Idol worship 46, 123, 128, 139, 271, 280, 424-25
  attacks upon 280-85
  Ezekiel on 255-59
Ignorance, as source of evil 357-58
Image of gold 424

Immortality
  denial of 377-78
  hope of personal 479
Individual
  belief in rights of 66
  readiness of, to sacrifice self for good of group 70
  responsibility 239-42, 260, 283, 524-25
    Ezekiel on 259-62
Information, statistical 48
Injustice, social 298; *see also* Justice
Intermarriages 321, 398, 400; *see also* Marriages
Internationalism 389
  Book of Ruth 397-402
Interpretation, Old Testament 19
Introduction, hortatory 47
Isaac 126-27
Isaiah 194-219
  Book of 194, 270-73
  coming of the Messiah 213-19
  conception of Yahweh 202-10
  death of 492
  doctrine of the remnant 210-12
  historical background 195-200
  opening vision 200-3, 210, 409
Ishmael, birth of 112
Israel
  Ezekiel on the future of 265-69
  failure of 190
  future of 265
  God's chosen nation 287
  knowledge of Yahweh 188-91
  prophecy in 142-93
  punishment of 186-88
  responsibility of 178-80
  restored state of 264
  servant of Yahweh 287-88
  war with Syria 97

J narrative 44-45, 100-1, 115; *see also* Judean narrative
Jacob
  journey of 41-42
  marriages 113
Jealousy 496
Jehoiakim, King, reign of 310
Jehovah, origin of the name 45, 51
Jeremiah 220-45, 521
  Book of 221
  Deuteronomic reformation 233-35
  disillusionment of 234
  doctrine of individual responsibility 239-42
  doctrine of inwardness of religion 235-39
  doctrine of the new covenant 235-39
  early prophecies of 229-33
  historical background of 222-29
  Jesus and 220
  life of 223-29
  personal influence of 243-45
  prayers of 244
  temple-sermon 238
Jericho, archeological researches in 65
Jeroboam II, reign of 165
Jerusalem
  court at 95
  destruction of 254-59, 262, 354, 501
  praise for 448
  Zion's city 270
Jesus
  God revealed in teachings of 16-17
  Deutero-Isaiah and 293-94
  influence of Jeremiah on 220-21
  as prophet 154
Jesus ben-Sirach, Wisdom of 477
Jewish apocalypses 468
Jewish apocalypticism 5
Jewish legalism 4
Jewish religion, desecration of 420-22
Job
  Book of 357, 359-64
    additions to 370-73
    authorship of 360-62
    epilogue to 272-73
    prologue to 360, 364-65
    symposium 365-68
Joel 325-27
Jonah, story of 388-97
  historical background 392-95
  message of the book 395-97
Joseph, story of 130-32
  coat of 130
  in Potiphar's house 113
Joshua
  farewell address 138
  Moses' address to 498
Jotham, reign of 198
Jubilees, Book of 487-90
Judah, history of 45, 99-120, 195-200; *see also* Judean narrative
Judaism, teachings of Ezekiel and 247
Judas Maccabeus, leadership of 472
Judean narrative 59
  concept of Yahweh 59, 62, 71
  contents of 107-17
  purpose of the history 102-3
  source materials 103-7
  values of 118-20
Judicial system 332
  organization of 135

Judith, story of 476
Justice 6, 89
  Amos on, 170-72
  concept of 21, 70, 89, 152, 209-10, 218, 312
  definition difficult 513-14
  Deutero-Isaiah on 290
  Ezekiel's conception of 259-62
  universal 172
  Yahweh's principles of 173-75

Kindness, quality of 301, 340
King, demand of the people for 67
Kings, prophets and 150-54
Knowledge of God, Hosea on 188, 192-93

Labor, exploitation of 321, 339
Lamentation, of David 82
Land
  concept that Yahweh possessed 68
  possessor of 55, 68
  tenure, laws concerning 332, 347
Law-book, found in temple 330
Lawgivers 509
Laws
  administration of 89
  Book of 47
  Book of the Covenant 87-91, 330-32
  Book of Deuteronomy 330, 332-34, 341-44
    finding of 330
    importance of 344
  of the central sanctuary 42, 47, 334-37, 341
  codes 328-55
  conceptions of 21
  conformity to requirements 520
  Deuteronomic reformation 233-35
  development of Hebrew 330
  divine 328
  early 84-87
  failure of 234
  Holiness Code 330, 345-48
  moral quality of 491
  perfect, of God 503
  philosophy of 21
  in praise of the 440, 459
  Priestly Code 48, 62, 349-50
  religious 90
  of revenge 88
  ritualistic demands of 328, 341-45
  supremacy of 486, 487-88
Legalism
  Jewish 4
  spirit of 486
Levites 268, 342
Leviticus 42, 330
Liberal education 8
Liberality 385
Life
  pleasures of 379
  worth and significance of 373
Line of Judah 488
Lion's den, Daniel in 426-27, 482-83
Literature, apocalyptic 408-33
Living, faith for 315
Locusts, plague of 325
Logos 15
Love of God, influence on one's life 386-87
Lower criticism 26, 29
Loyalty 70, 400
Luther, Martin 312, 463, 464

Maccabean wars, 422-23
Maccabeus, Judas, leadership of 423, 472
Magic, sympathetic 92
Major and minor prophets 295
Malachi, Book of 321-24
Man
  Hebrews' conception of 516
  nature of 515-19
  purpose for which he was created 110-11
Manasseh, prayer of 484
Mandrakes, eating of 127
Marriages 321-22, 324
  festivals 57
  intermarriages 324, 347, 389, 398, 402, 467
    story of Ruth 397-403
  Jacob's 113, 347
  Levirate 347
Material prosperity 359
Materialistic philosophy, of Democritus 22
Mattathias, revolt of 422, 471
Meat
  clean and unclean 55, 342, 350
  laws governing 341, 347-48
Mercy, concept of 514
Messages
  to Ahaz 208
  of the Apocalyptists 414
  to Jonah 390
Messiah
  apocalyptic writings and 413, 499
  character of the 215
  Jesus as the 4
  prophecies concerning the coming of 213-19, 301, 528, 529

Methods of bible study 12-25
  allegorical 14-18
  authoritarian 12-14
  detached 18-20
  historical 25
  proof-text 18
  scholars 25
  scientific 25-49
Micah, Book of 296-301
Minor prophets 295; *see also* Prophets
Moderation, desirability of 378
Mohammedanism, sire of 19
Monarchy
  Ephraimite narrative objects to 141
  establishment of, by Hebrews 72-74, 141
Monotheism 280, 285-94, 335, 456
Moral and ceremonial sins 261
Moral conduct
  emphasis on 153-54
  religious practices compared with 205-6
Moral laws 283
  Amos' conception of 173
Moral philosophy 22
Moral reformation 317, 332-33
Morality
  Book of the Covenant 90-91
  conception in the Old Testament 519-22
Moses
  address to Joshua 498
  Assumption of 498-99
  author of laws 84, 331
  authorship of 35, 36
  birth of 132
  and the burning bush 114
  conceptions of Yahweh 52
  covenant relationship between Yahweh and Israel 85-87, 332
  law given to 61-62, 63
  as a prophet 147, 159
  revelation to 487
  song of 77
  worship of Yahweh 51-52, 58-64
Motives for action 385-86
Mount Carmel, sacrifice on 161-62
Mount Gerazim, temple at 398
Myths and legends, use of 104, 119

Naboth, vineyard of 163
Nahum, patriotism of 305-8
Names of the deity 352, 457
Narratives, Old Testament 91-98, 388-407
National unity, desire for 66-67
Nationalism
  Book of Jonah and 388-97
  Hebrews' ideas of 389
  poetry of Nahum 305-8
  spirit of 343
  story of Ruth and 406
Nations
  foreign; *see* Foreign nations
  rise and fall of 359, 363
  security for 192
Nature, impersonal force of 512
Nature of man 151-59
Nature poems 371
Nebuchadnezzar 414-16
  dreams of 427-28
New covenant 87, 235-36
New Testament, based on Old Testament 4
Nineveh, destruction of 305-7, 308
Noah, story of 38, 105-6, 110, 352
  curse on Canaan 110
Nob, priests of 73

Oath, use of 90
Obadiah, Book of 312-14
Obedience to God 49, 123, 140
  Judean narrative 102-3, 119-20
  lesson of 140
Offerings
  of bullocks 455
  Canaanite religion 54
  Hebrew laws governing 90
  sacrificial 54
  tithes and 323
  unsatisfactory 322
Old Testament
  allusions to 4
  authorship of 9, 30-31
  beginnings of 75-98
  conception of human nature in 518
  contemporary reading of 7-12
  defined 3-7
  discrepancies in 27, 28
  divergencies of views expressed in 505
  early poems 76-83
  effect on literature 3-7
  greatness of the 505
  importance and influence of 3
  methods of studying 12-20
    allegorical method 14-18
    authoritarian method 12-14
    detached method 18-20
    scientific method 25-49; *see also* Scientific method
  oral tradition 103-4
  philosophical significance of 20-24

Old Testament—*Continued*
  prophetic writings; *see* Prophets
  short stories in 91-98, 388-407
  sources 75-76, 91-98
  style of writing 10, 37
Omri, rise and fall of the House of 97-98
Ontology 22
Oppression, Hebrews hate 66
Oral tradition, in historical writings 103-4
Orthodox
  definition of 363-64
  solution, to the problem of suffering 361

P narrative 48, 349, 351, 353
Parables 494
Passions, control of 503-4
Passover, celebration of the Feast of 69, 341, 351, 353
Patriarchs, Testament of the Twelve 496-97
Patriotism 305-8, 402-7
Paul, Apostle 221
Penitence 453-54
Pentateuch, authorship of 37, 39-44, 70
Persecution
  periods of 415
  religious 420, 421, 424
Personal relationships, sages on 357
Philistines, wars with 72
Philosophers, Epicurean 374
Philosophy
  of history 526-29
  of law 21
  moral, of Old Testament 519
  Old Testament 20-24
  study of 20
Pilgrims, procession of 447
Pillar of cloud and of fire 61
Plagues, of Egypt 115, 134
Pleasure of life, Ecclesiastes on 379
Poems, in the Old Testament 76-83
Polytheistic religion 58
Poor
  prophets objected to the treatment of 299-301, 339
  Yahweh's love for 449
Prayers 244, 311, 315, 484
  Psalms are 436-37
Predictions
  apocalyptic writings 410-16
  concerning the end of the world 427-33
  time 416
  of Yahweh 283-84
Pride, human 507, 518
Priestly narrative 48, 62, 349-50
  concept of Yahweh 62
Priests 510
  duties and prerogatives of 48
  of Nob 73
  prophets differ from 152-53
Progress, denial of 375-76
Property
  equitable distribution of 337-38, 347
  laws pertaining to 88-89, 347
Prophecy 19, 410-11, 486; *see also* Apocalyptic writings
  early manifestations of 148-50
  kings, priests, and prophets 150-54
  meaning of 142-45
  messianic 213-19
  periods of 416
Prophetess 79, 80
Prophetic writings, character of 144
Prophets
  Amos 164-80
  earliest 159
  Ezekiel 246-69
  forerunners 145-48
  function of 143, 509
  Habakkuk 308-12
  Haggai 314-17
  hirelings 149
  Hosea 180-93
  influence of 142
  Isaiah 194-219
  Jeremiah 220-45
  Joel 325-27
  Malachi 321-24
  Micah 296-301
  minor 164, 295-327
  Nahum 305-8
  Obadiah 312-14
  opposition to the 151
  personality of 157
  priests differ from 153
  prior to the eighth century 159-63
  reading the 154-59
  school of the 147
  spokesmen for Yahweh 276
  Zechariah 317-21
  Zephaniah 301-5
Prosperity, material 359
Prostitution 56, 385
Protestant Reformation 312
Proverbs, Book of 357, 380
  classified 380-81
Psalms, Book of 242, 434-61
  beauty of the 434, 438
  characteristics of the 434
  Davidic authorship of 441

  editing of 442
  experience reflected in the 435-36
  growth and development of 439-43
  prayers 436
  of Solomon 502
  teachings of the 443-44, 455-61
  types or classes of 443-55
Pseudepigrapha 485-504
  historical writings 487-90
  influence of 485
  meaning of the 485-504
Punishment
  of animals 89
  equal to the crime 88-89
  for sins 230-32
  Isaiah's ideas on 202
Purim, Feast of 402, 406
Purity, idea of cultic 268, 347-48

Quotations from Old Testament 4

Rachel, story of 128
Reason
  nature of 507-8
  validity of 506
Rebekah, story of 112
Red Sea, crossing of 76-77, 115
Reformation
  counter- 333
  Deuteronomic 233
Reformers, social 9
Relationship, covenant 52, 70
  personal 357
Religion
  of the book 344
  desecration of Jewish 419-23
  ethical aspects of 70
  inwardness of 231
  legalistic 328
  matter of heart 236-37, 241
  monotheistic 280, 285-94
  moral conduct compared with 205-6
  polytheistic 58
  ritualistic 341, 354
    criticized 205-6
  sanctions 167
  spiritual 459
Remnant of people
  doctrine of 210
  Zephaniah and 304-5
Repentance
  concept of 211
  Ezekiel's teachings on 261
  physical disasters necessitated 325-26
Research, archeological 53, 65
Responsibility
  individual 239-42, 259-62, 524-25
  Israel's 178-80
Resurrection from the dead 432
  belief in 502
Retribution, doctrine of 383, 460-61
Revelations; *see also* Apocalyptic writings
  divine 410
  nature of 507-8
  true and false 23
Revenge, laws of 88-89
Reverence, development of attitude of 35
Right and wrong, ideas concerning 22, 519-22
Righteous, sufferings of 309-10
  concept of 22, 312, 480
  Pharisaic conception of 502-3
  teacher of 490
Ritualistic performances, of Canaanites, 54
Ritualistic religion
  criticized 205-6
  requirements 341, 354
Rituals
  Amos denounces 170
  prophets and 152-54
  requirements 248, 341-45, 354
Ruler, omnipotent 48
Ruth, story of 397-402
  values in 401-2

Sabbath 48, 347
  origin of 351
  year 346-47
Sackcloth 365
Sacred legends 490-92
Sacrifice
  burning of 56-57
  inferior 322
  laws governing 90
  on Mount Carmel 161-62
Sacrificial offerings 54
Sacrificial smoke 57
Sacrilege 419
Sages 356-87, 510
  conception of wisdom 381-84
  ethical teachings 384-87
  position 356
Salvation, means of achieving 506
Samson, riddles of 356
Samuel, prophet 146-47, 148-49, 160
  Saul's visit to 146
Sanctuary
  law of the central 334-37
  where Yahweh dwells 267

Satan 319
  wager between Yahweh and 364
Saul
  disobedience of 139
  leadership of 72, 92
  visit to Samuel 146
Scepticism 379
Scholar's method, of studying Old Testament 25
Scientific method, of studying Old Testament 25-49
  documentary hypothesis 34
  higher criticism 25, 30-49
  lower or textual criticism 26-30
  purpose 25-26
Scythian invasion 230, 302
Secrets of Enoch 499-500
Seers 90, 146
Sennacherib's invasion 199-200, 212
Servant, in Deutero-Isaiah 290-94
Seven brothers, story of 474
Sex morality 70
Sex relationships, laws pertaining to 347, 496-97
Short stories
  in Apocrypha 474-77
  in Old Testament 388-407
Sibylline Oracles 497-98
Sin
  of Achan 137
  definitions, Judean history 102
Slaughtering of animals 341, 346
Slavery, Hebrew law concerning 8, 45, 88, 338
Smoke, sacrificial 57
Social justice
  Amos on 165, 170-71
  concept of 163
  Ezekiel on 256
Social reformers 9
Social regulations, Decalogue and 90
Social relationships, story of Ruth 401-2
Social righteousness 6, 152
  prophets of 332
Solomon
  Book of acts of 95-96
  proverbs of 358
  Psalms of 502
  reign of 72, 95-96
Songs
  of Deborah 78-80
  of Moses 77
  of revenge 76
  of the Suffering Servant 11, 31
  of victory 76
  of the vineyard 204-5
  of the well 77
Sons, treatment of rebellious 329, 343
State, theocratic conception of 141
Stoicism 503, 512
Storehouses in Egypt 131
Stories of creation 104
Suffering
  distribution of 309
  of innocent persons 288-90, 294, 359-73, 514, 530-32
  of nations 530-31
  not always punishment 240, 359-60
  orthodox solution 361
  "Poems of the Suffering Servant" 290-94, 532
  problem of 312, 530-32
  purpose of 192
  of righteousness 309-10, 468-69
  vicarious 288-90, 294
Synagogue, origin of 350
Syria, Israel's war with 97, 422-23

Tabernacles, Feast of 341
Taboo 54-55
Tammuz, weeping for 255
Temple
  building of 267-69
  centralization of worship in 334, 341
  doctrine of inviolability of 238
  location of restored 264, 267
  at Mount Gerazim 398
  rebuilding of 316, 321, 467
  sacrifices in 325
Ten Commandments 240
  historical background 84-85, 116
  obedience required 85
Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs 495-97
Theocratic conception of State 141
Tithes, offerings and 323, 341-42
Transgressions, moral and ceremonial 261
Truth
  criterion of 506
  determination of 23

Unclean meat; *see* Meat
Uzziah, death of 198

Valley of dry bones, vision of 266
Virgin, deflowering of 88
Visions
  of boiling pot 230
  of Enoch 494
  of four beasts 429
  in Pseudepigrapha 485

  ram and he-goat 431
  valley of dry bones 266
  of Zechariah 318, 319
Voice of conscience 163
Voice, in Ramah 232
Voice in wilderness 279

Want, freedom from 385
War, coming of warless world 218
Warfare, in Old Testament 17
Watchers 493
Weeks
  Apocalypse of 495
  Feast of 341
Weights and measures, law on 339
Western culture, development of 7
Wilderness, voice in 279
Wisdom 96
  concept of 359, 381-84
  literature 356-87, 477-80
    Psalms and 502-4
  in praise of 382
  pursuit of 383
  sages conception of 381
Wisdom of Solomon 479-80
Wise men, or sages 356, 384
Woman, creation of 37
  laws governing 88
  position of 45
Word, of God 508
Worship; *see also* Yahweh
  conduct of 341-42
  Psalms and 436, 442, 443, 456
Writings, Apocalyptic 19
Wrong, idea concerning right and 22, 519

Yahweh
  Amos' conception of 170-75
  beginnings of worship of 58-64
  characteristics of 45, 70-72, 163, 457
    agricultural deity 68
  conceptions of 510-13
  covenant relationship between Israel and 62, 70, 85-87
  creation of universe 285-86
  day of 176-78
  divine foreknowledge of 283
  ethical demands of 337
  ethical nature of 204-10
  gave Commandments 85
  God of all nations 291
  God of justice 170-78, 309, 513
  God of love and mercy 186, 231, 279-80
  holiness of 202-10
  Hosea's conception of 185
  individual trusts in 242
  Isaiah's conception of 202-10
  Israel, servant of 287
  judge and lawgiver 328
  Kenites' worship of 63-64
  knowledge of 188, 192
  mercy of 231, 279-80
  moral nature of 163, 205
  Moses and the worship of 51, 52, 58-64
  name, first use of 39, 40-41, 45, 46, 352, 457
  obedience demanded by 102-3, 119-20
  power and majesty of 271, 277
  power over fertility 69
  power to change human desires 235
  presence of, leaves the city 259
  Psalms and 456
  relationship to man 509
  spiritual being 336
  supremacy of 263, 276-80
  transcendence of 252
  triumph of 206
  universal justice 172
  wager between Satan and 364
  worship of 153-54, 175
Year of release 43, 337-38, 346-47

Zadok, Books of 489
Zadokean priests 268, 350
Zechariah 317-21
  visions of 318, 319
Zephaniah 301-5

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